

Sam ^{Brue 10:10} THE *Hill*

JEWISH SPY:

James I. BEING A *Hill*

PHILOSOPHICAL, HISTORICAL and
CRITICAL Correspondence,

By LETTERS

Which lately pass'd between certain
JEWS in Turkey, Italy, France, &c.

Translated from the ORIGINALS [into French,
by the MARQUIS D'ARGENS;
And now done into English.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THEODORE I.

BY THE
KING OF SICILY



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To his Pretended MAJESTY

THEODORE I.

King of *CORSICA*.

SIRE,

WILL your MAJESTY permit me to present you with the translation of the second volume of *Lettres Juives*? I am aware that, considering the devil of a patron to whom I chose to dedicate the first volume, you may perhaps think it extraordinary that I shou'd presume to prefix so august a name as yours at the head of this. But if you will please to recollect, SIRE, that, before your arrival in Corsica, you were almost as obscure as Jemmy, --- You will pardon my boldness.

What a misfortune it is for the Hebrew nation, that you did not take it into your head to set up for king of Jerusalem! Surely you cou'd not have fail'd of as

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DEDICATION.

great success in such an undertaking, as in that which renders you master of an estate that lawfully belongs to the Genoese. What a lustre would it have given to the Jews, if you had but been pleas'd to have personated the Messiah whom they expect! And how happy would it have been for that people, to have had an adventurer at their head, so enterprising as you are! Perhaps you thought it would be a task too difficult, and decline it for fear you shou'd not succeed; but you wou'd have found considerable supplies from the Jews of Amsterdam. I will venture, Sire, to give you a piece of wholesome advice: If you are driven out of Corsica, get yourself circumcis'd, and carry a people who only wait for a deliverer, to the banks of Jordan: But if you wou'd win the hearts of the Hebrews, you must govern them more mildly than you do the Corsicans; for the Israelites don't love to be shot to death, and you'll never obtain your will of them by severity.

In my opinion you tread much in the steps of those who conquer'd the new world; Ferdinando Cortes treated the Mexicans just as you treat the Corsicans. Did you catch the genius of that Spanish general in your travels in Spain? Remember that he made use of the difference of religion as a cloak for his cruelties.

But

DEDICATION.

But the people with whom you bear the sway, are of the catholic and apostolic church of Rome. Perhaps you take the duke of Alva for your model; if so, Sire, you follow a bad one. He lost half of the Netherlands, where his barbarity contributed not a little to the forming of the republic of Holland.

Believe me, therefore, Sire, your pretended majesty had better take pattern from a number of great men, who with all their valour and courage were always ready to pardon. Henry IV. of France, to whom your MAJESTY is no more akin, than St. Crispin is to the great God, conquer'd his kingdom as much by good-nature, as by arms.

By imitating that hero, you wou'd attract the hearts of all mankind. The inhabitants of your new empire will be fond of you, and foreigners will flock to offer you their service. The count de Bonneval will quit the turban to come and be general of your forces: The Baron de Pollnitz will put on his little band again to be your chaplain: The Duke de Ripperda will abandon the interest of the king of Morocco to be your minister of state: And I can assure your Majesty, that if a breach between me and my family had not been made up a few days ago, I should have embraced the post of your

DEDICATION.

chancellor with great pleasure. But you will not want illustrious personages to fill that high station, and I promise you that I will take care to inform myself what persons may be deserving of the employment, and to give your Majesty a faithful account.

I am, with a profound respect,

S I R E,

Your pretended MAJESTY'S

Most humble, and

most obedient servant,

M. D.

PREFACE.

JUST as I had finished the fourth volume, I received from Amsterdam the twenty-third tome of the *Bibliothèque Francoise*; in which I found a letter, wherein, under colour of setting forth the state of the sciences in Spain, there is a warm declamation against a certain work, not mention'd indeed, but so plainly describ'd that one may easily see it means the *Jewish Letters*.

I resolv'd at first to make no answer to this criticism, the author of which passes in the eye of the world, as well as in the republic of letters, for a kind of madman, and a perfect copy of the famous *Don Quixote*. In reality, 'tis well known, he is as romantically fond of the Spanish nation as the hero of *La Mancha* was of his incomparable *Dulcinea*. I did not therefore look upon myself as oblig'd to take notice of the objections of such a person; and and I should have held my first resolution if I had not afterwards reflect'd, that this impertinent letter being insert'd in a journal, wherein we sometimes meet with useful and curious pieces, many readers might be persuad'd the criticism came from the journalists themselves. I will therefore just point out a few of the many blunders in that ridiculous piece.

This knight of Iberia undertakes at once the defence of all the authors who have been cri-

ticized in the Jewish Letters. He ought to be pardon'd for resenting the affront put upon them, because a good part of it falls to his own share; and he appeals to the public against the injustice which he imagines to have been done to him. "He treats as blockheads, says he, men of learning, who have put it in the power of the public to judge of their erudition." To this I answer, that there can be nothing so false; and I defy him to name an author, worthy of esteem, whom I have not commended. Descartes, Gassendi, Bernier, Mallebranche, Bayle, Locke, Gravesande, Vitriarius, Boerhaave, De Thou, Daniel, Paschal, Sirmond, Peteau, Lamy: In short, all the learned, of whatever country, whatsoever condition, or whatever religion they are of, Catholics or Protestants, Jesuits or Jansenists, they were all one to me. Wherever I discover'd merit I have not scrupled to own it. I have been equally just to the authors of works relating to poetry and romances: I have commended Corneille, Racine, Milton, Pope, Petrarch, Tasso, Gaurini, Don Lopez de Vega, Cervantes, Crebillon, Voltaire, Rousseau. It is true, that even at the time I allow'd the last to have wit, I denied him somewhat else, which I thought I both might and ought to do, since it was taken from him by a solemn arret of the first parliament of France. Those I have mention'd are all good authors; and for their works I shall ever have the highest esteem. Where then are the writers I have treated as blockheads "who had nevertheless given the public an " opportunity of judging of their erudition?" I fancy the critic had a mind to point out him-

self. But how entred it into his brain that his copying three pages from Moreri's dictionary and three more from the dictionary of Corneille, and connecting them with scraps from other books, and with his pillage from Baudrand, whose dictionary he has almost robb'd of every word; how could he think, I say, that this would give the title and character of a man of learning? I proceed to other complaints:

“It is astonishing, says this Critic, that a person of birth, education, wit, fortune, and honourable employments, should quit all, and take up the mean employment of an author.” These praises bestow'd upon me are only garlands to adorn the victim; and I am raised to this height purely to be tumbled down from it. Before I leave this article I must and will say it, that though it were true, that fortune had placed me in a splendid condition, there is nothing shameful in my quitting it, in order to abandon myself entirely to philosophy, and to enjoy that sweet satisfaction which results from the cultivation of the sciences. Were the works of Rochfoucault, Montaigne, Malherbe, Racan, or Ruffi Rabutin ever objected to them as a crime? The famous cardinal Richelieu was as zealous for having the reputation of an author as he was for the destruction of Spain. This critic, no doubt, despises the cardinal, and thinks him much to blame. But to proceed to his reproaches.

He ranges me in the class of those libertine writers who set pen to paper for no other end but to run down religion, virtue, knowledge and merit. As to virtue and religion, I have made it clearly enough appear, that none but

a perfect

a perfect slanderer could be guilty of such language: And as to the small respect he says I have shewn towards the truly learned, I have just explained myself on that head. If, indeed the critic is really a learned man, then I own I have done wrong to condemn his works but this is a point which I leave to the decision of the public.

As this censurer hath not thought proper to enter into any detail, but only runs out in general invectives against me while he commends excessively a number of miserable authors, it's impossible I should answer him as to the faults he may find in this book. Before I conclude this preface, therefore, I will examine some of the praise of which he has been so lavish on the Spanish writers; and I shall evidently demonstrate, that they are a hundred times more hurt by his compliments than they could have been by the most abusive criticism. One may well apply to him, in this case, the fine passage in Tacitus: "*Pessimum Inimicorum Genus Laudantes.*"

Our critic begins by establishing the goodness, beauty, and delicacy of the Spanish genius on the works of St. Teresa, Lewis of Granada, and the reverend father Rodriguez; and he even proceeds to insult me by questioning whether I know those books: I dare say, they are as well known to me as to him, tho' I value them much less; especially Rodriguez, of whose writing I have read some very bad books, very meanly translated, and so generally condemn'd, that Moliere was not afraid to ridicule them in one of his pieces. I am astonish'd the Critic did not know this line:

“ She read Rodriguez, and us’d mental prayer.”

Perhaps ’twas a wilful forgetfulness; for as to theatrical matters, they are to be sure within the sphere of his knowledge.

I come next to the dramatic poets, whom this critic has commended in a manner so ridiculous, that if he had intended it, he could not have satiriz’d them more severely. These are his own words: “ The Spanish dramattick authors have been long the magazines whence our authors have supplied themselves. Scarron and Montfleuri are instances.” Can any thing be said so much to the disgrace of the Spanish poets as to make them the inventors of the vilest farces, and to give them for disciples and imitators the worst and most despicable of our writers? What notion should we have of certain poets if we were told that Pradon form’d his taste by perusing their books? Should we not have reason to regard them as the very sink of the republic of letters? It must be confess’d the critic has but bad talents for commending. Defend me, heaven, from such a panegyrist! I even prefer his hatred to his friendship. In order to shew him the difference between the praises I have bestow’d on some valuable Spanish writers and the sad stuff he writes about them, I shall here report what I have said to Don Lopez de Vega in my 118th letter: “ That author hath written comedies so excellent, that the great Corneille assures us, that he would have given two of the best tragedies to have been the inventor of the Lyar. Thou knowest it was upon the plan of the Spanish play the French poet composed

posed his." I leave it now to be decided, whether the critic or I aim'd to affront the Spanish nation. But I shall be still in a better way to obtain a favourable verdict, when the reader sees the parallel of what we have both said of Spanish historians.

The critic contents himself with mentioning the History of Arragon by Zurita, and The General History of Spain by Mariana. By an unaccountable stroke of folly, of two authors mention'd by him, there is one who ought to be abhorr'd by all good men: Not but that the history of Mariana is a good book; but he compos'd another *, which the parliament of Paris condemn'd to the flames, and which the Jesuits themselves have disavow'd. In this work he has insinuated, that it is not only lawful, but laudible to put to death an heretical or a tyrannical king: He praises, even to excess, the execrable monk who murder'd Henry the third, and is not asham'd to call him the honour and glory of France. It must be acknowledg'd, that since the critic resolv'd to quote but two authors, he ought to have avoided making Mariana one of them, or else he should have follow'd my example, and mention'd several others at the same time. I shall transcribe from my 118th letter the names of some, in the order they are therein commended: Antonio de Solis, Sandoval, Antonio de Herrera, don Bartholomew de las Casas. Nor have I forgot to praise such poets and Romance writers as are worthy the esteem of readers of Judgment: As Michael de Cervantes, Matthew Alcmán, don Alonzo

* De Rege & Regis Institutione.

de Hercilla, John Rufo, Christopher de Virves, &c. It may easily be determin'd from the number of those authors, whether it was my design to sink the reputation of one nation, in order to raise that of another. It is true, I did maintain, and do still, that the Spaniards have not one philosopher amongst them; and that none they can have by reason of the inquisition. And is not this a truth of which the whole world is convinced? The critic indeed will not allow it. Like a magnanimous and unconquerable knight he is determin'd to stand to his opinion right or wrong: An exact and worthy copy of the hero of Cervantes with whom there is no living on good terms, if one does not purely and simply confess, that the very faults of his charming Dulcinea are superior to the virtues of the greatest princesses.

In order to give the greater weight to his opinion, the critic calls in the authority of father Rapin, who, in his *Reflections on Philosophy*, says the Spaniards excel in metaphysics. But that author's blunder is no excuse at all for the critic's: For example, the commendation given by this Jesuit to the physics and logic of Aristotle is sufficient to shew whether his opinion ought to be look'd on as decisive in matters of philosophy *. "There appear'd nothing, says he, that was fix'd and regular, either in logic or true philosophy, before Aristotle. This genius, so very rational and intelligent, enter'd so deep into the abyss of human understanding, that he penetrated to its most secret recesses, by the accurate distinctions he made as to its operations.

* Rapin, *Reflections sur la Logique*, Num. iv. p. 373. 374.

Before him they had never founded this vast ocean of the human thought, in order to judge of its depth. Aristotle was the first who discover'd this new way, in order to attain to science by the evidence of demonstration, and to proceed to demonstration geometrically by the mode of syllogism, the most accomplish'd work, the greatest effort of the human mind." To shew the impertinence and ridicule of this elogium, and also what sort of books those are which passed with father Rapin for master-pieces, in philosophy, I shall only cite a passage from Descartes, another from Mallebranche, and a third from Locke. Whoever would be more fully convinced of the nonsense of the writings of this Grecian sage need only consult the illustrious Gassendi in his *Exercitationes Paradoxicæ adversus Aristotelicos*.

I begin with transcribing the opinion of Mallebranche*: "Aristotle seldom reason'd on any other than the confused ideas we receive by the senses, and other vague, general, and indeterminate notions, which convey'd nothing particular to the understanding. The terms made use of commonly by this philosopher served only to express confusedly to the senses and imagination, the indiscriminate notions he had of sensible things, or else were contrived to make up so loose and indeterminate a discourse as expressed nothing distinctly."

Let me next introduce Descartes†: "The logic of the schools is properly speaking nothing more than a dialectic; which teaches us a me-

* Mallebranche, *Recherche de la Verite*, Liv. V. cap. ii. p. 388.

† Descartes *Principes de la Philosophie*, preface.

thod of imparting to others what we know, or even of putting a parcel of words together, without judgment, upon things we know not, consequently it corrupts good sense rather than augments it.

I close my confutation of father Rapin with a passage from Mr. Locke †: "We reason, says he, much better, and with more perspicuity when we observe only the connection of proofs, without methodizing our thoughts, or forming them into syllogisms. God hath not been so sparing of his favours to mankind, as only to make us two-legged creatures, and leave to Aristotle the care of making us reasonable beings."

One sees by this how little the authority of father Rapin is to be relied upon, especially in respect to philosophers; and inasmuch as he is profuse in his praises of Aristotle, one need not be very much surprized at the praise he bestows on the Spanish metaphysicians. It is but a natural consequence of his way of thinking, all those metaphysicians being zealous followers of Aristotle. But to shew either the ignorance or knavery of our critic, if there be so many excellent philosophers and metaphysicians in Spain, why did he not name some of them; This he could not possibly do, or at least not without making himself still more ridiculous than he justly was before.

To finish the answer I have condescended to give to his objections, I will endeavour to confute his assertion, that I affect to decry the

† Essay on Human Understanding, book iv. ch. xvii.

Spanish nation. It is true that I said, and do say it again, that they are proud, haughty, lazy, superstitious, and excessively submissive to the monks. But tho' I thus exposed their faults, as I have done those of other nations, I have done justice to their virtues. Without repeating all I have ever said on this subject, I will here cite only a few lines from my 106th letter: "During the reign of Philip V. there have been very able men in the Spanish ministry; but the storms to which all courts are liable, have removed them from their places. The man that is most cried up here is cardinal Alberoni: Not only the strangers, who are here in great numbers, but also many Spaniards do justice to that able minister. Since the accession of Philip V. Spain hath overcome half the evils which were brought upon her by such as were intrusted with the administration of affairs under Philip IV. and Charles II. Her troops are numerous, brave, and well disciplin'd. There's a fourth part more people in the country than there was, by means of the great numbers of French and Flemmings who are settled there; and this crown, which for one while was perfectly despised, makes as good a figure now, as it did formerly."

I think I have now said enough to shew the folly, the ignorance, and knavery of this pretended Iberian knight; for I shall not reply to his invectives, and to those gross reflections which he has thrown out against me in the close of his epistle. God forbid that I should ever introduce the language of fish-stalls from Parnassus: It is the mind alone, and not the body, which

is a member of the republic of letters. Were it not for this, how often should we be confounded to know in what rank some people ought to be placed; Where, for example, should we bestow a man, who, after being in his youth a rope-dancer, a tumbler, a player, in his old age married two dressers of the actresses one after another, and last of all, a turkey-driver that was reduced to serve in an alehouse; and, which is still meaner, to be his own servant? Sure I am that the critic must allow if this individual person was a member of the republic of letters, it would be difficult to find such an original a proper station.

Before I conclude this preface, I shall say a word or two of some translations made of the Jewish Letters: I am told there is a Dutch translation which will quickly appear, the MS. being actually in the hands of a bookseller*. I have not seen it; and if I should see it, I am no judge of it, since I understand not the language: But one who is a master of it, says, that it is extremely well done, which is all I know of the matter, having not the least acquaintance with its author. I am inform'd also from Germany, that the two first volumes of the *Lettres Juives* are translated into High Dutch.

* 'Tis just now printed at the Hague and dedicated to me: I am very glad of this opportunity of expressing my gratitude for this piece of civility, and the just sense I have of the honour done me, in communicating my letters to a nation for whom I have an infinite esteem.

But what is still more singular than all this, beyond comparison is, that I have receiv'd advice that they are actually reprinting this work at Avignon, and that two volumes of it are already publish'd but miserably mangled and deformed; which is the common fate of every edition that is counterfeited in the Pope's dominions.



I have now printed in the French and English languages, two volumes of the History of the Jews, which I have translated from the Hebrew, and which I have corrected and augmented with many new facts and observations, and which I have printed in the most elegant and useful manner.

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L E T T E R L V.

An account of Theodore's first taking possession of the island of Corfica.—The manner of his arrival there, and description of his dress.—Reflections on kings in general.—The ridiculous behaviour of the Chinese to their gods.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris ———

I Know not, dear Brito, whether the news from Corfica is so much talk'd of at Venice as it is at Paris; but what they give out here upon that head is very surprizing and hardly credible, if we had not evident assurances of it. Is there any thing, in short, so extraordinary as to see a stranger come to an island from the coasts of Africa, and be own'd as sovereign by a people, and actually receiv'd as their deliverer, and this too in the face of all Europe, but forty or fifty leagues from France and Italy, and no power seems to be concerned in it but the unhappy Genoese, who are in a very perplexed situation. Were one to run over all the Amadis, I don't think there is any adventure so romantic. I no longer wonder that Sancho Pancha had such firm hopes of being king of an island. I perceive the

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thing was not impossible, provided his master, [don Quixote] could have given him wherewithal to buy three thousand pair of shoes, four thousand muskets, and six brass guns; for that's the present which the new king of Corsica has made to his people. He arrived at his new government on board a ship of force, which, as they say, carried English colours. He was dress'd in a fantastical manner, his habit being a medley of the various modes of all nations. His robe was Turkish, the sword by his side was Spanish, his peruke was English, his great hat German, and his cane was of the Halbert fashion, like those used by the French beaux. He must have some reason for so whimsical a medley. Perhaps he intends by his dress to dethrone all the dignities with which he is invested; for he assumes the titles of a grandee of Spain, a lord of England, a peer of France, Baron of the holy empire, and a prince of the Roman throne. His sword, a la mode de Spain, supplies the place of the Golden Fleece; his English peruke that of the Garter; his halbert-cane that of the Blue String; his great German fashion'd hat denotes the quality of Baron of the Holy empire; and his his great scarlet robe signifies the diminutive of a cardinal, or, if you please, a Roman prince.

Notwithstanding the banter of the public upon Baron Theodore I. the new made king of Corsica, he has since his arrival in that country reduced the Genoese to a very dangerous state. He has taken the advantageous post of Porto Vecchio, and the town of Sarsena, in which he found a great quantity of ammunition; and if he goes on at this rate, he will soon be in a condition to lay siege to Bastia, and to take the capital of the island from his enemies. What is most surprising in all the actions and proceedings of king Theodore is, that he is in no want of money. Before he came to Corsica,

*La nature maraitre, en ces afreux climats,
Produisoit, au lieu d'or, du fer, & des soldats *.*

Step.

* Crebillon en Rhadamistus and Zenobia.

Step-dame nature in these hideous climates,
Instead of gold, soldiers produc'd and iron.

Whereas now, there's not a mountaineer in Corsica but can shew a piece of gold. The coins that are most current in this island are Sequins, Murlitons and Portuguese pieces. The wizard by whom this adventurous knight-errant is protected, does not let him want for money, and takes special care of the affairs of this new monarch. All Europe is really as much perplexed to know who this notable magician can be, as it was at first to know the true origin of Lord Theodore. Some said that it was prince Ragotski, others the duke Ripperda; and their reason for thinking so, was the report that the lord Theodore heard three masses a day. This is a circumstance which I think might comport with the bigotry of Ragotski, but it was ridiculous to imagine that the duke de Ripperda could turn a staunch Nazarene at Morocco. If that were true, I would advise the French to send most of their physicians and Sorbonne doctors to take a turn there.

The name, rank, and quality of the new king, are indeed now no longer a secret, all the world being agreed that he is the baron de Neuhoff, born in the county of la Mark, and a subject of the king of Prussia; but the public is still at a loss to discover who is that powerful magician that so handsomely rewards a knight-errant, and that without putting him to the least expence. But what would be the use of such reflections as I might be capable of making, on so mysterious a subject; time will discover the secret, and nothing but time can unravel so extraordinary an adventure, which the more we examine we are the more surpriz'd at a thousand incidents that render it the more marvellous and romantic. This Baron de Neuhoff, now king of Corsica, was a year ago a slave at Algier; which is a circumstance of his life that he himself acquaints the public with, by a letter that he wrote in the German tongue to one of his relations since his arrival in his new dominions. "You

"have not heard," said he to him, "of the misfortune I had to be taken at sea last year, and carry'd to Algier as a slave; from which however, tho' with very considerable loss, I have found means to deliver myself; but I must defer till another opportunity to acquaint you of what I have since, by the divine favour, acquired."

Don't you think it pleasant, dear Brito, to hear the slave of an Algerine decline the owning his obligation for his grandeur to any thing but the divine favour; and that the man, who but a year ago, ran the risk of being bastinadoed for the least fault, shou'd now say with an emphasis, "Theodore I. by the grace of God, king of Corsica and Bastia, to the officers of our councils and courts of justice, to our senators, proveditors, bailiffs, stewards, &c. greeting." These are the frolics of blind fortune which delights to raise a man from nothing to the most distinguish'd honours; and we often see a man preferr'd from the dregs of the people to great employments. 'Tis true there are few examples of so great and sudden a rise as lord Theodore's; yet if we go so far back as the first origin of kingly power, we shall find that the men who were design'd and elected to command their fellow-creatures, had no greater or more just prerogatives over the people, than Theodore has over the Corsicans. The name of King would to this day have been unknown in the world, if the common interest of mankind had not forc'd them to vest the chief power and authority in a single person. The Corsicans made desperate by the Genoese, have had recourse to a private person to deliver them from tyranny. If he restores them to liberty, and frees them from slavery, what signifies it to them what condition he was born in?

Un guerrier genereux, que la vertu couronne,
Vaut bien un Roi formé par les secours des loix:
Le premier que le fût n'eut pour lui que sa voix †.

† Crebillon in Semiramis.

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i. e. A generous warrior crown'd with virtue, is as good as a king form'd by the help of the laws: The first man that ever was a king, was only so by his own voice.

If we consider the conduct of the Corsicans, it does not seem to be a whit more ridiculous; they reward their benefactor, they honour their deliverer; why should it be deem'd criminal in them to pay homage to virtue, and to have gratitude? 'Tis my opinion they act very judiciously, and that all their proceedings are regulated by good sense and sound policy. Whatsoever credit and authority they have granted to their new prince, they have nevertheless given a check to the monarchical authority; and their sovereign can lay no tax nor impost upon them, nor publish any new law without the approbation of his great council, which consists of eighteen senators that represent the states of the kingdom. Lord Theodore has only the same prerogatives as men granted to the first sovereigns *, whom they elected; he commands the armies, and does justice according to the laws and customs of the country, which he cannot change without the consent of the nation. In short, he has a great deal of power to do good, but not the least authority to do harm.

May they perish, dear Brito, who maintain the pernicious maxim, That men were only created blindly to serve a single person. Nothing but pride can make a sentiment go down which violates all laws, overturns the world, and seems to attack the Deity himself. The laws were made before sovereigns, who therefore are bound by them as well as their subjects. A private person who is wanting in duty to his country, and his prince, is a dishonest man; and a king who violates the laws, and despises justice, is unworthy to command.

* Thou shalt be our captain in war, and thou shalt do us Justice.

Tyranny was unknown among men, till the time when the ambition of the courtiers deify'd the vices of the sovereigns. The crimes of bad kings sprung from those of their subjects; flatterers poisoned the majesty of the throne, from whence they banish'd real grandeur to make room for chimerical honours, founded upon the misfortunes of mankind.

Princes ought to mind nothing but the good of their people, to whom they are fathers, or at least supply the place of such. The patriarchs to whom they succeeded were crowned kings and fathers of their families by the hands of nature, they governed them by the laws of nature; and that wise jurisprudence continued without interruption, till men became so wicked as to have need of written laws, and of a king, who, tho' he had as much power as the father of a family, had less good-nature and inclination to pardon. Therefore it was wickedness that introduc'd sovereigns. If men had always been just, they would always have been free, and would have had no necessity either for governors, judges, or advocates. But since it is necessary that they should be restrain'd by fear, and since they are such vile slaves to their passions that they are only virtuous from the apprehension of punishment, they are bound for their own sakes to grant that power to one or more, which they might have shared in the general among all. But he whom they own for their sovereign is obliged to submit himself to the laws, because he has no power but what is by virtue of those very laws by which men are commanded to honour and obey those who are trusted with the government of them.

When a prince violates the rules of justice, what a pernicious example does he not set to his subjects? Does he not as good as tell them, "That faith, oaths, and the most sacred customs are ties that may be broke with safety? follow my example; be only wise and just where you cannot be criminal with impunity."

Mean

Mean time, don't imagine, dear Brito, that I have a thought of limiting the sovereign authority; I am willing that justice should accompany it, in order to render it more respected. Is not equity the principle of real grandeur? and where there is a wise and good king, who is the father of his people, and governs them in peace and plenty, has not such a one more absolute command of their hearts than a tyrant who is only served out of fear?

Perhaps thou wilt ask me, to what degree I am of opinion that subjects ought to be true to their kings? I answer, 'Tis my opinion, that it is in no case lawful for them to pass sentence upon the man, whom God has set over them for their judge. 'Tis for that Almighty Being to punish bad kings. The subjects ought to pray to the Divinity to reform their transgressions; but content with lifting up their hands to heaven, if their prayers are not heard, they cannot rebel against the Lord's Anointed, without enormous guilt.

God makes use of wicked sovereigns as of a scourge like to a pestilence or famine. Tyrants are born for the punishment of mankind. We must submit to the hand of the Lord, who punisheth or rewardeth us according as we deserve. 'Twas the divine wrath that made the Caligula's and Nero's reign in Rome; and the excesses to which those monsters push'd things, were but a just punishment of the crimes of the Romans.

It would be altogether as criminal an absurdity to argue that a man may rebel against his prince, as to offer to excuse the ridiculous conduct of the Chinese towards their Gods. While they expect any good from them, they honour and respect them: but when they don't obtain their desires, they treat them with the utmost contempt. "What thou dog of a spirit," say they to him sometimes, "do we lodge thee in a very fine temple, do we maintain thee in clover, while thou art well gilt, well perfumed, and dost thou refuse us the favours which we desire of thee?" Then they take a great whip and lash the idol

idol for ten or twelve days successively. If during that time they obtain their request, they make several excuses to it; "Why, say they, Mr. Spirit, were you so obstinate; tis true that we were a little importunate, but when all is said and done, were not you in the wrong to be so hard-hearted a deity? Why wou'd you suffer yourself to be beaten for the purpose? However, since what is done can't be undone, let us think of it no more; you shall be re-ador'd, you shall be perfum'd over again, and you shall have wherewithal to make excellent cheer, provided you forget what is past *."

A Chinese who had one of the most wilful and whimsical idols, being vex'd at the needless expence which he had laid out a long time upon it, and being unwilling to be the dupe of so ill-natured a Deity, he prosecuted him, and summoned him before the sovereign council of Pekin. After several sessions wherein the bonzes made the best defence that they could for the idol, the idolater carry'd his cause. The court, in regard to the plea of the Chinese, and in justice to the same, condemned the idol as quite useless in the kingdom, to perpetual banishment; his temple was raz'd to the ground, and the bonzes who served at the altar of the idol, were severely punished; only they were allowed to bring their actions before other spirits in the province, in order to make themselves reparation for the punishment which they had received for the sake of this †.

As ridiculous and impious as it would be to attempt to justify actions so extravagant, it would be altogether as criminal to argue that the people may of their own accord do themselves justice upon those to whom the Almighty has remitted the sovereign power, and whom he has rendered accountable for it to himself alone.

* History of China, tom. ii. p. 223.

† Ibid. p. 224.

The laws are the judges of men; the kings are the executioners of those laws; and God is the sole master of sovereign princes.

Fare thee well, dear Brito, and let me hear from thee oftener.

LETTER LVI.

Customs of the Venetians described.—Character peculiar to their watermen—Great freedom allow'd to the subjects, unless they interfere with government affairs, or plot against the state; then severely punished.—A Relation of an odd adventure at Messina.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Venice ———

VENICE, my dear Monceca, is not like most of the towns of Italy, which only furnish general reflections upon the manners of the inhabitants. The meanest sort of people at Venice, the women, the priests, the children, all the several classes in this country, are worthy of notice. In my former letters I gave thee some account of the government in general; I shall now enter into a little more circumstantial detail of the particular customs.

The noblemen, when they appear in the streets are always dress'd in a robe of black cloth, which in the winter is lined with a grey russet, and in the summer with ermin, Tho' fur is not very seasonable in Italy in August, yet were they to drop down with the heat they must not dress otherwise; for majesty, grandeur, and policy demanding it, they have nothing more to do than to yield obedience. Nor is it in this only that the Venetian noblemen are victims to their rank; they are the same almost in every action. They are called by the title of Excellency, and the way of saluting them is to kiss their sleeve. The elbow of this sleeve is like a large sack, and commonly serves as a wallet to the Venetian

netian nobles when they go to the market or the shambles; so that in the sleeve, which is the residence of Venetian grandeur, there is very often a leg of mutton and a dozen of artichokes. This may appear strange to thee, but the nobles go themselves to buy their provisions, without being attended by any domestic, and without being saluted by any, except such as are of their particular acquaintance. They pretend to wit, and to be excellent politicians, but this is no more than what all the Venetians think of themselves; for in this respect the very gondoliers, who are no more than watermen or rowers, will not truckle an inch to the first nobleman; and they boast that no undertaking is too difficult for them to succeed in.

'Tis true, that a gondolier will carry on a love-intrigue better than any body, and that he brings it to a happy issue, what ever difficulty lies in the way: He knows all the turnings and windings; he pretends to know the critical minutes and back-stairs; he has an understanding with the Abigails; he furnishes the rope-ladders too if there be occasion: In short he can give good advice to the politest monks, and might be admitted, if he were in France, to the secret councils of the convulsionaries. In order to have a perfect idea of him, believe him to be as deceitful as a convulsionary Jansenist, as artful as a jesuit, as debauch'd as a Carmelite, and as hypocritical as a young abbe that lies upon the catch for a benefice.

The carnival is the time when the gondoliers have most business, by reason of the great number of foreigners then at Venice; but as soon as lent comes in, every body begins to dislodge, not only travellers, but the puppet-shews, stage-players, bears, monsters, curiosities, and courtezans; that is to say, such as come for devotion-sake from the neighbouring countries: For they take care that those of Venice shall not desert, they being deem'd of too great importance to the welfare of the state. These also study politics; for their profession, tho' painful and fatiguing
enough

enough in other respects, does not hinder them from applying to it; and some of 'em have really made a figure, in that science. One in particular, who wou'd fain imitate Solon, and cast a lustre upon the profession of ladies of pleasure, caus'd a stately chapel to be built out of the money she had gain'd, and dedicated it to one St. Magdalen the Egyptian, that had been an infamous harlot, just as that legislator of the Athenians built a temple to Venus out of the money which had been receiv'd by the common whores.

The churches of this city are very beautiful; but the Venetians give them such names, that one wou'd think their religion had a mixture of the Jewish. I know not whether 'tis their indifference for the court of Rome, that hinders them from invoking the saints which it has canonized, but almost all their temples are dedicated to our patriarchs and our prophets. A Jew, at his first arrival in this country, is very much surprized to hear their churches call'd by the names of St. Job, St. Moses, St. Samuel, St. Jeremiah, St. Daniel, and St. Zachary. The monks who serve at St. Jeremiah's affirm, that they have still a tooth of that prophet. I enquir'd very strictly whether they had not some horn of our legislator in the temple of St. Moses, but I cou'd not find they had; nor whether in St. Job's they had preserv'd any of that honest man's scabs in some holy phial. A fryar told me in confidence, that such relics were very uncommon and dear, the court of Rome selling them at an excessive price: So that, in all appearance, there is nothing in the temple of Moses but the arms, legs, and jaws of Nazarene saints; and no relics of the antient Israelites in all Venice, but the single tooth of the prophet Jeremiah, which is kept in a gold case adorn'd with diamonds: 'Tis so big, that it seems to be the tooth of a horse rather than of a man; at which the monk who shew'd it to me, told me, that I ought not to be surprized, because the antient fathers were much taller than we are.

This

This monstrous tooth put me in mind of another relic, which a friend of mine told me he had seen in a very fine church at Munich: 'Tis a Vertebra, or chine-bone, as big as that of an elephant, or some other great animal; and is held in singular veneration throughout all Bavaria, as being one of the Vertebrae of the huge St. Christopher.

Tho' the monks at Venice, as well as in other countries, set a great value upon their relics, yet they seldom find any but among the meaner sort of people, that are ready to believe all the miracles which they ascribe to them. Persons of rank look upon these things as amusements, which are absolutely necessary for the vulgar; nevertheless, if there should ever happen to be at Venice, any relics so troublesome as those of St. Paris are in France, I don't doubt but the senate wou'd immediately order them to be thrown into the Adriatic gulph, and very severely punish those that should offer to make them popular. The republic having a quarrel some time ago with one of the sovereign pontiffs, the latter actually interdicted and suspended the whole clergy of Venice. The senate commanded the priests to continue their functions. Mean time some of the fryars * obey'd the pontiff, but they were soon chastised for their rebellion against the orders of the state; for they were banish'd out of the republic, and tho' recall'd when the senate and pontiff were reconcil'd, 'twas only by favour, and upon very hard conditions.

I formerly acquainted thee, dear Monceca, in some of my letters, how dangerous it is in this country to cabal against the state, and with what severity the bare appearances of this crime is punish'd. Great rewards are given to those who inform against the disturber of the public tranquility, when the intelligence is capable of being really useful. Informations and letters, even from anonymous hands, are attended too; tho' 'tis true they make a prudent cautious use of such intelligence. There are in the

* The Jesuits and the Capuchin friars.

piazzas of St. Mark's palace, and in several parts of its galleries, the muzzles of certain animals, in the mouths of which any person may put letters, as they do money into a box at church for the poor, with such informations as they think fit to give to the inquisitors of the state. This is what they call Denuntie Secrete, i. e. secret information. But for all this, don't imagine, dear Monceca, that there's any great danger from such anonymous information, and that it puts any man in the power of his enemy. The judges who compose the state inquisition, are so candid and prudent, that no body need to fear punishment if he is not really guilty. We don't find any country in the world, where mankind is so free as at Venice. The Armenians, Jews, Greeks, have the public exercise of their ceremonies. All the other religions are likewise tolerated; but they don't pretend to know that there are any such assemblies, they being held in such a prudent manner, that the senate has no reason at all to complain of them. The very monks here have full freedom: they put on the mask when they please at the carnival, keep a concubine, sing at the theatres, and, in short, do what they list, provided their debauchery or devotion does not interfere with the affairs of state. There's no similitude between the maxims of Venice and Rome, but in the protection granted in both cities to the courtezans; there being no people that less resemble each other, especially as to matters of superstition, and the authority of the monks.

As to the authority of the monks, they tell a very comical story here, which lately happen'd at Messina. The consul of Holland residing at that place, had a very pretty daughter of sixteen or seventeen years of age, whom the devotees took it into their heads to make a saint, saying, they could not bear the thought that so lovely a creature should ever fall a prey to the devils. To put her into the right path, and to open the way for her to heaven, they resolv'd to persuade her to quit her parents; and, in order to render that action the more meritorious, to rob

them at the same time. They quoted five or six Spanish divines to her, who gave leave to a daughter to rob her father when he was a protestant, and when she left him to retire to a monastery. The young woman, after some consideration, being convinc'd of the piety and sanctity of the robbery, only wanted an opportunity to put it in execution. Two reverend capuchin fathers lent her their assistance; they went often to the collection that was made at the consul's house, who gave them alms, very far from imagining what a trick they intended to put upon him. Mean time the disciples of St. Francis carry'd off some apparel, or other things of the young catechumen's every day; and for this purpose the large wallets in the sleeves of their robes were of very great service. At last when they had pack'd up all the cloaths, the new convert stole a purse full of pieces of gold, and elop'd. 'Twas not long ere her parents heard of her. No one can express their surprise, when they knew their daughter's project, and the cause of her escape; but their only remedy was patience.

The new saint was admitted a nun; and she made a vow never to entertain a love-passion, but to be obedient to the humours of a fantastical old shrew, and to keep no money, but to give it all to the fryars*.

For near three years together the whole talk at Messina was about this holy convert; a collection had been already made, which amounted to near an hundred thousand crowns, the sum necessary for canonizing her after death. Many a fryar when in the pulpit, used her conversion as a pretence to declaim against all the Nazarene protestants: They foretold the entire ruin of England and Holland; and actually bestow'd some compliments and rhetorical flourishes on the pretender, assuring him that he wou'd be plac'd on the throne as soon as God had

* The three vows of the nuns, chastity, obedience, and poverty.

put all the English to death, as a punishment for their rebellion; so that it wou'd be then in his power to carry over as many monks with him as he pleas'd who should also be of great use to re-people the country.

While this blessed nun was the talk of all Sicily, while every mother was quoting her for an example to her daughter, when they were ready as it were to cut her old cloaths into scapularies and relics, she vanish'd all on a sudden. It was thought at first she was conceal'd from human sight by a miracle, while she was conversing with St. Rose or St. Clara; but since she did not appear again, it was the opinion of an able divine, that as she had for some time past no more grace than what was barely sufficient, she had play'd some frolic, that sort of sufficient grace not always sufficing; and that they must wait for a motion of efficacious grace to produce her return. Tho' the divine seem'd to talk rationally, the inquisition thought his reasoning dangerous, and he had like to have been severely punish'd for a Janсенист. As for the fair saint, she return'd to Holland in a Rotterdam vessel; and, in order to make use of efficacious grace, she obey'd the first commandment of God, and begg'd pardon of her family for her disobedience. The bishop being mortify'd and touch'd to the quick, when he heard that one of his ewe-lambs was stray'd, alarm'd the whole city of Messina; and it was as much as the governor himself could do, with all his authority, to protect the consul's person; for his house was search'd all over, and his domestics examin'd. But after a great deal of enquiry, the bishop was forc'd to arm himself with patience, and to make himself as easy at the elopement of his nun, as the consul was for the rape of his daughter.

Fare thee well, dear Monceca, and let me hear from thee.

LETTER LVII.

Advantages arising from the use of printing.—Many valuable works suppress'd or mangled by bigotted transcribers before the invention of printing.—Lewis XIV. applied to the grand signior to obtain a compleat copy of Livy, said to be in the freglio-library.—The monks and priests always suppress such books as don't coincide with their principles and practice.—Disputes between the Jansenists and Molinists.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris ———

THY letters upon the manners and customs of the Venetians, gave me a real pleasure. I admire their wisdom in setting such narrow limits to the ambition and fanaticism of the monks; but the rule which I think the most rational of all, is that which exempts such books and writings as are printed and publish'd in the dominions of the republic, from the cognizance of any of the ecclesiastical tribunals whatever. That's a sure method to keep the people always in a state of independancy, and to give them an aversion to superstition.

The ideas of the most illustrious men become common to every private man, and the learned do not lose their time in endeavouring to perfect the understanding of all their fellow-citizens, when the liberty of instructing is left to the one, and that of improving to the other. The ambition of the monks, and their care to suppress every thing that might be pleaded against them, have depriv'd us of a thousand master-pieces. How many excellent books were either entirely suppress'd or castrated by the bigots, before printing was invented! We ought to think ourselves happy that this curious art has put a check to their knavery. Had books been ever so little a-while in their power, we should scarce perhaps have had any other historians or authors, than some miserable Na-

zarene

zarene scribblers. The conformities of St. Francis to Jesus Christ, and the Annals of some monks would have taken the place of Titus Livy and Sallust: And if a sovereign pontiff cou'd have had his will, that first-rate writer, the prince and monarch of historians would have been entirely suppress'd. That pontiff, nam'd Gregory *, condemn'd this work to the flames. What a misfortune wou'd it have been to mankind, dear Brito, if this Gregory's cotemporaries had been as mad as he was! Malice and hypocrisy are the most mortal enemies of learning, which enrages them because it takes off their mask, and shews their deformity.

When mankind seem'd to have forgot the use of their natural reason, the monks and the priests, who were the only persons that copied the manuscripts, sold them at an excessive price, and took care to strike out every thing that might give any light into their frauds. They wou'd undoubtedly have wholly suppress'd certain books if we had not prevented them. For being scatter'd thro' all Greece and Italy, we had those MSS. as well as they; and it being impossible to hide them intirely, they contented themselves with taking out whole pieces, and substituting others sometimes in their room. We even to this time see daily examples of these monkish superstitions; one half of the works of Horace, Juvenal, Ovid, &c. is wanting in the editions which have been publish'd by the monks: And if several others did not preserve those master-pieces entire, we shou'd quickly lose those last treasures of antiquity for good and all.

I own to thee, dear Brito, that I can't imagine how Lucretius happen'd to come down to us intire; I don't know who were the transcribers that were so exact in preserving him. If they were the monks that we are oblig'd to for it, I heartily forgive them for one quarter of their knaveries; not that I approve of that poet's pernicious sentiments concerning the

* Gregory I. surnamed the Great.

Deity ; for, dear Brito, may those perish who have not the profoundest veneration for the Divine Being : But the rest of his work is so compleat, so beautiful, and so diversify'd, that it would have been a sad thing to have been depriv'd of it intirely.

By chance the works of Petronius are also transmitted to us almost entire. We have likewise recover'd some other fragments of several authors ; and one day perhaps we may be so happy as to discover Tacitus and Titus Livy, without any chasms, and in their perfection. 'Tis assur'd by many people, that the grand signior has this last historian compleat in his library. I have heard this fact affirm'd as true by a great many people, but I can assure thee that I know the contrary, and can speak of it with a great deal of certainty.

Lewis XIV. always vigilant to promote his own glory, was willing that the world should be oblig'd to him for all the works of Titus Livy, if it is true that they cou'd be come at ; and he sent to M. de Feriol, his ambassador at the Porte, to offer any money for the Titus Livy which was said to be in the library of the seraglio. M. de Feriol apply'd to the vizier, who spoke about it to the grand signior. The latter made some scruple, for they thought then at the Porte that it was not proper for the MS. to be compar'd and examin'd whether it was more compleat than the work we have. M. de Feriol was not discourag'd at the miscarriage of the first attempt, but got somebody to speak to the librarian, and offer'd him a hundred thousand crowns if he would only be pleas'd to let him have the MS. for a time, and give leave for the transcribing of such passages as were wanting in the printed copies of that historian ; which done, the book might have been replac'd in the library, and the passages stole out not perceiv'd. This proposal prodigiously pleas'd the librarian, who thought a hundred thousand crowns worth his acceptance, and promis'd to deliver the book ; but the cream of the jest was, that after a good deal of search, there was no such MS. to be found. So far

was

was a Titus Livy from being found intire among the grand signior's books, that there was not so much as one of the copies to be found which we have of that author, or at least if there was, the librarian did not think proper to declare it. Being sorry that he did not touch the hundred thousand crowns, he made answer, that after a search he did not find what was wanted. I know that it may be supposed that the librarian after reflecting upon the hazard which he ran, might alter his opinion. This indeed is not absolutely impossible; but I know on the other hand that an hundred thousand crowns must be an extraordinary temptation to a Turk, who is used to run all risques for money.

What is wanting of this historian is so much regretted in France, that I am sure two hundred thousand crowns would not be grudg'd there for a compleat copy of him, and the money wou'd easily come in again, by subscriptions for several gentlemen of the kingdom, who would be willing to have copies of the same.

Would'st thou think, dear Brito, that in a country where good authors are so much valu'd, the monks have nevertheless found means to establish a sort of inquisition against bookselling? All books by which they think themselves hurt, are proscrib'd and prohibited under grievous penalties. They enjoin penance in the confession-chairs upon those who read them, and stir up the magistrates to join with them. It seems as if it were more dangerous barely to write in a book that the monk is commonly a knave, than to publish a system of atheism, or any work contra bonos mores. But for all the bustle they make, as soon as a book is printed in any part of Europe, if it be good for any thing it is immediately sold at Paris, and sooner too than in any other part of Europe. The prohibitions, issued to hinder the sale of them, do but raise the price and promote the vend of them to a very great degree; for the hawkers take care to furnish the beaux, the lawyers and the courtiers with 'em; the very ladies are so fond of reading pro-

prohibited books, that they have them brought to their toilets as appurtenances to their dressing; and while the milliner is employed in erecting the gallant edifice of their hair, some well-beloved friend, fine gentleman, or a lover, reads certain pages with an audible voice.

Thou wilt perhaps be curious to know the principal motive of the persecution against books, and which are those that are most severely proscribed. Tho' all pieces that have a tendency to cure the people of superstition are generally prohibited, yet there is not so much care taken to hinder the sale of them, as of those which favour Jansenism or Molinism; and tho' they can no more stop the vend of the latter than of the former, yet do what they can to suppress them. I own, dear Brito, that it would be for the public service that those works were suppress'd, which are commonly but a series of impostures, calumnies, and gross railing. The Jansenist authors especially are famous for disputes of this kind, for when arguments fail them, they supply the want thereof with invective. They give extravagant pay to a man, who twice a week publishes a printed sheet * throughout Europe, in which he is obliged to abuse every man who does not believe that the water in which a piece of St. Paris's slippers has been boiled, is a cure for all sorts of distempers.

I have often mentioned the Molinists and the Jansenists to thee, but never told thee that tis impossible to live in this country, without espousing either the one or the other. Such is the spirit of caballing that prevails at Paris, that were a man of Spinoza's sect he cannot be neuter. The Jansenists and the Molinists refuse none; they don't oblige such are admitted into their body, to make profession of their faith at entrance, and only demand, that they swear a mortal hatred to their adversaries. Notwithstanding the necessity there is for a man to enlist himself under one of the two standards, I must tell thee,

* The Nouvelles Ecclesiastiques.

dear Brito, that I have thought myself obliged to look with very great indifference on the disputes of a religion of which I think the principles bad. Nevertheless, tho' tis well known that I am a Jew born at Constantinople, unknown to the Jesuits, that I am of no ambition, and take no pleasure but in the study of philosophy, yet two or three persons who are my familiar acquaintance here, have taken it into their heads that I am a Molinist. "We see, they often say, your hatred of St. Paris: You openly condemn his miracles: The convulsionaries, in your opinion, are fanatics that ought to be sent to the galleys. The perspiration, say you, which would arise from the fatigue, from the bastinado, and from the painful exercise of rowing, might purge those sharp humours, which floating in their blood occasion their phrenzy. You would fain see the abbe Becheran and the chevalier Follard metamorphos'd into galley-slaves, recover their reason by a tedious penance exercised in all the parts of the Mediterranean." "What, reply'd I, is the wishing that imposture may be punished, the same thing as to wish that hatred, and ambition may be deify'd?" For, dear Brito, this is the true picture of the Jansenists and the Molinists. The former are dangerous impostors; the latter are devour'd by a lust for dominion, and a thirst for revenge. They are all equally to be dreaded; but their faults are different.

The Jansenist is ill-natured, and a bigot from his cradle, and sucks the spirit of rebellion and sedition with his mother's milk. The first words which he learns to speak are invectives and scandal against the pontiffs; and the older he grows the more he hates them. Under the external appearance of mistaken piety, he conceals a base and dangerous mind. Being a wicked Nazarene, a rebellious subject, a perfidious friend, a parent without friendship, three words which he is eternally repeating, serve for a specious pretext to all his crimes, "The Liberties of the Gallican Church," is the cabalistical cant of the Jansenists sect. There are no odious sins which
those

those words don't cancel, and which they don't also authorize.

The ambitious Molinist wants to command wherever he comes. Like the high winds he overturns whatever makes resistance, and spares whatever yields to him. He banishes the haughty Jansenist by a letter de cachet. In vain is he supported by the city and the provinces; for, like the oak, whose deep roots cannot save it from being overthrown by a storm, he perishes; while the libertine, the atheist, and the debauchee, which like feeble reeds bend and seem to yield, are safe and perfectly tranquil. 'Tis not the crime nor the criminal which the Molinist hates, but the rival of his greatness, or what may become such. No person is innocent in his sight, as soon as he is in a capacity of being hurtful to him. Too much learning and virtue attract his hatred. He is for fewer good qualities, and more obedience. He is good-natured, sincere, polite, complaisant, and a downright, honest man when alone; but when he acts in concert with his brethren, he is proud, haughty, insupportable, a tyrant and a persecutor. One half of the misfortunes of this kingdom is owing to the ambition of those who are now called Molinists. They formerly persecuted the Nazarenes, to whom France was obliged for her glory *; for they had placed the greatest king in the universe upon her throne, but wickedness pluck'd him from it, and the consequence of that wickedness was the ruin of that monarch's benefactors.

Thou perceivest, dear Brito, the judgment that ought to be formed of the sects of the Jansenists and Molinists. The members of the first are dangerous, and those of the second are no less so, the very moment that they act in common and in a body. But after all, thou wilt conceive a false notion of the French, if thou dost imagine, that either those who are call'd Molinists, or those who are call'd Jansenists, are much disturb'd at those cabals. These

* The Protestants.

names are assumed here, as I told thee, because tis the fashion to declare either for the one party or the other. Therefore, when I talk to thee of the Molinists and the Jansenists, I only mean them who are at the head of those sects, who foment division in the state, and abuse the goodness, lenity and clemency of their prince. If ever a prince is pardonable for too much severity, tis when such severity tends to make his subjects perfectly easy. If in the beginning of those troubles, the Jansenists had been severely punished for their restlessness, and the Molinists had been check'd in their ambition, every man might have thought what he pleas'd both of Jansenius and Molina; and perhaps by this time neither of them would have been remember'd.

Fare thee well, dear Brito, and go on to prosper.

I. E T T E R LVIII.

Some passages relating to Sabbathai Sevi, a Jewish impostor, who pretended to be the Messiah.--- Another named Moses, who sprung up in Candia, in the time of Theodosius, and put a very odd trick upon his credulous brethren, under the same pretence. Papists in France much given to superstition.—Remarks on Mr. Pope's Essay on Man.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris—

I Was glad, dear Isaac, to hear of thy arrival at Smyrna, where, thanks be to the God of our fathers, thou art safe from those dangers to which thy change of religion did expose thee. As soon as thou art arrived at Cairo, let me hear from thee, and make me perfectly easy in my mind.

The particulars which thou gavest me of the impostor S bbathai, have confirm'd me in the opinion, that I ought to place no confidence in, and give no credit to, things which I don't know from full evidence. An old merchant of Provence to whom I shewed

shew'd thy letter, and who in his youth spent several years at Smyrna, told me upon the mention of Sabbathai, a very pleasant adventure, which happen'd to a couple of Englishmen who were settled at Constantinople. They had advanced considerable sums to certain Jews, and were afraid they should lose their money. While they were uneasy to have it again, curiosity on the one hand, and interest on the other, determin'd them to carry their complaint to Sabbathai Sevi when he was a prisoner in the castle of Dardanelles. The impostor heard them with great gravity and good-nature, and by the following letter ordered the Jews to pay them.

L E T T E R.

“ To you of the Jewish nation, who wait the coming of the Messiah, and the salvation of Israel,
“ Peace without end.

“ **I** Am inform'd that you owe money to several English Gentlemen: We think it but just to order you to pay your debts; which if you refuse to do, and are disobedient to us in this instance, know that you shall not enter with me into my kingdom.”

The Englishmen thank'd Sabbathai Sevi in terms of great respect, and taking advantage of his imposture, and the Jews weakness, they had their money again.

There happened another comic scene to Sabbathai Sevi during his imprisonment, which proved afterwards his intire ruin, and discovered his knavery.

One Nehemiah Cohen, a Jew that understood the Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldaean languages; and was as well vers'd in the Cabala of the Rabbies as Sabbathai himself, was covetous of a share in the reputation of that impostor, and therefore desired a conference with him. Their conversation was at first very tranquil, but after having tried in vain to settle matters on such a footing as might be agreeable to both, they grew warm and fell into a violent passion.

"Is it not true, said Cohen, that according to the Scriptures there are to be two Messiahs; the first, poor, despised, a preacher of the law, a servant of the second, and his forerunner: the second, rich, powerful and victorious? I am content, continued he, to be Ben-Ephraim, or the poor Messiah. What prejudice is this to your glory? Will not you be as much Messiah the Conqueror?" After many debates, Sabbathai Sevi consented that Cohen should be the poor Messiah; and their dispute was just at an end, when Cohen thought fit to reproach Sabbathai Sevi for having been too hasty in giving himself out to be the powerful Messiah, before the poor Messiah that was to be his forerunner, had made himself known to the world. Sabbathai took it amiss that Cohen should be so forward as to criticise his conduct. — "I cashier you, said he to him, you are not, and never shall be Ben Ephraim." "And I, reply'd Cohen, cashier you in my turn, and promise you that I will hinder you from being own'd as Ben-David." Then the dispute grew hot between these two impostors, and from hard words they proceeded to blows. The Turks who had the guard of Sabbathai Sevi, and who had heard this pleasant conversation by listening at the door of his prison, ran and separated the combatants. Cohen took a quick revenge; for he told the chief ministers at the Porte, that Sabbathai Sevi gain'd ground daily upon the affections of the Jews, who had the same esteem for him as ever, notwithstanding his knavery and imposture. We have often had monsters among us, who by abusing the credulity of their brethren, in order to satisfy their ambition or their avarice, have assum'd the title of Deliverer of the Jewish Nation, and the august name of the Messiah.

In the reign of the emperor Theodosius the younger, there was a Jew in Candia who did our nation much more mischief than this vile impostor Sabbathai. This Jew call'd himself Moses, and he affirmed that he was the very prophet Moses who conducted the Israelites in the wilderness, and rescued them

from the Egyptian bondage. He spent a whole year from place to place in the island of Candia, where he preach'd in all the synagogues, and promised all the Jews, of whom there were great numbers in that island, to carry them over sea without a ship, and to lead them into the very heart of Judæa, without so much as wetting their feet. The day was actually fix'd for their setting out, when being followed by a vast multitude of people, he went to a very high beach, and commanded those that were foremost, to cast themselves into the sea, as soon as they came to the brink of it, without any fear, assuring them that they would run no danger. The silly people, deluded by this villain, actually threw themselves headlong into the sea, where they had been justly punished for their credulity, if some fishermen that happened to be there at the time, had not saved them from the waves, and hindered those that came upon the heels of the others from following their example.

Our nation is not the only one, dear Isaac, that has been abused by impostors. Where is the kingdom, where the religion that has not been productive of seducers? The Nazarenes ought not to upbraid us with our false Messiahs: Have not they people among them every day, who under the pretence of religion, and the veil of piety, plunge them into the wildest errors? Sabbathai Sevi never made so much impression upon the minds of the Jews, as St. Paris has done upon the French. No Israelite was ever so much infatuated and blinded, as to mistake the fits of phrenzy for the visible marks of the grace of God, employing a parcel of madmen to declare his holy will. We have sometimes placed our belief in men that promised us things that were tempting; and such pleasure has their doctrine given us that we have even help'd to deceive ourselves. But they who seduce the Nazarenes, preach nothing to them but troubles and calamities; all the convulsionaries at Paris foretel the end of the world, the dethronings of the pontiffs, the destruction of the states: So that a man

must have a strong byass to fanaticism, to chuse such prophets for his guides:

I know, dear Isaac, that every thing that is extraordinary strikes and captivates the minds of the people; tho' the Nazarene popish countries are more subject to superstition than others. But in England and Holland you scarce meet with any that are possess'd; because the devils take few walks in those countries. For as in those dominions no friar can shew in public what power his holiness gave him over hell, Belzebub and Astaroth don't trade thither in company, or at least nobody talks of 'em.

Some days ago I received a letter from the Hague with an account that a tradesman of that place complain'd of a spirit which came in the night time, and tore all his cloaths and furniture to pieces. The common people, who are alway credulous, readily believed it, and crouded to the tradesman's house, who shewed them some of the pieces of stuff and linen that had been cut and torn off. He told a thousand stories more surprising than all this, of the mischievousness of this spirit. The high-bailiff, informed of the affair, ordered that nothing more should be laid in the spirit's way to be torn, and enjoin'd the tradesman to talk no more of the imp; nay he gave the latter to understand that he should be answerable for the folly of the former. Since that time the spirit has decamp'd, and the tradesman now lays the blame upon the rats, of what he imputed at first to this invisible substance.

The Nazarene papists pretend, that this devil was one of the best-natur'd sort, or else all the authority of the magistrates would not have banished him. They say there is a sort of spirits very easy to be laid; and that, without having recourse to the Ritual, or book of Ceremonies, an air of Quinault's opera is of as much avail as an exorcism of the church. Upon this occasion they quote one Ignatius Loyola, who, in order to drive the devil out of the body of a woman that was possessed, and desired his help, made use of that verse of Virgil,

Speluncam Dido dux & Trojanus eandem.

In the same cave the Trojan chief
And Dido shelter took.

He had scarce pronounced these words, but the woman was thrown flat upon the ground, and the devil left her, begging heartily that he might not be shut up in the infernal cave. He obtained leave to go wherever he pleased, provided he never possess'd any man more*.

You must own, dear Isaac, that this is a pleasant way of driving out devils. If one single verse of Virgil has the virtue to banish a dæmon, I don't doubt but were that poet to recite his whole *Æneid*, it would be powerful enough to drive them all out of hell, and to purge it, in short, from their detestable race. He wou'd therefore do great service to the authors, his comrades, and especially to Horace, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Petronius, who being voluptuous by nature, and brought up in good company, cannot but think that of the devils a little too obstreperous.

Now I am mentioning good authors, a hawker brought me a new book †, which I have read with a great deal of pleasure: 'Tis a translation of four epistles in verse, written by the illustrious Pope, the best poet of England. The original is good, and so is the translation; for tho' the latter be in prose, yet the translator has therein preserved the spirit and beauty of the English verses. The subject of these epistles is important, for they all treat of metaphysical matters, which are explained in a clear and concise manner.

I. The first treats of the nature and state of man with regard to the universe. The author therein proves that man is not an imperfect being, that he is

* Joannes Christianus Frommam de Fascinatione, lib. iii. part ix. cap. iv. num. xv. p. 949.

† Essay on Man, by Mr. Pope.

proportioned to the place and rank which he holds in the creation, and to the ends and relations which are known to him: He founds the present happiness of human beings partly upon the ignorance of future events, and partly upon the hopes of future happiness, and condemns their unjust complaints against Providence as a crime.

II. The second teaches man to know his nature and condition, considered with regard to himself. It opens the spring and cause of all our actions, of which self-love and reason are the two principles, and shews how much our knowledge is circumscrib'd.

Superior Beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man unfold all nature's law,
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And shew'd a Newton, as we shew an ape.

I know not, dear Isaac, whether this sentiment be as taking with you, as it is with me; but I think there is something in it that is grand, sublime, and yet natural. 'Tis also well express'd in the French:

III. What follows is a description proper for characterising the pride of man; and I think that all good judges cannot but admire it.

Has God, thou fool! work'd solely for thy good;
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?
Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
For him as kindly spreads the flow'ry lawn.
Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings:
Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat?
Loves of his own, and raptures swell the note.
The bounding steed you pompously bestride,
Shares with his lord the pleasure and the pride.
Is thine alone the feed that sows the plain?
The birds of heav'n shall vindicate their grain.
Thine the full harvest of the golden year?
Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer,

There, dear Isaac, you have one of the finest pieces in poetry. What different images, what a variety, what stretch of imagination! The poet offers all nature to our sight; and the philosopher demonstrates to us, that we have no more share in it than the other creatures. Don't we see, in short, as soon as we divest ourselves of our prejudices, that nothing was made intirely for us, or the others? The passage I have just now quoted is the third epistle, wherein the author examines the nature and condition of man, with regard to society, gives a detail of the several centuries and ages of the world, and shews the origin of the first societies since the creation, which were form'd by instinct, and cemented by reason.

IV. The last of these four epistles treats of that happiness which men court with so much eagerness. The poet proves that all may be happy in what state soever heaven has plac'd them; and that in order to attain to felicity and tranquility, there is nothing wanting but good-sense in the mind, and sincerity in the heart. The poet says

Ask of the learn'd the way, the learn'd are blind;
This bids to serve, and that to shun mankind:
Some place the blifs in action, some in ease;
Those call it pleasure, and contentment these.
Who thus define it, say they more or less
Than this, that happiness is happiness?
One grants his pleasure is but rest from pain,
One doubts of all, one owns even virtue vain.

Thus, dear Isaac, thou hast the true picture of our blindness. We dispute about the definition of what is capable of making us happy; we ramble a great way about, in quest of what we have already in our own reach, Virtue, Health, Necessaries. There is true happiness; whoever enjoys those three things is happy in perfection; but as the two latter are not absolutely at our command, God has given a power to the first, to comfort us for the loss and deprivation

tion of the other two. So that, dear Isaac, a man is never extremely unhappy, so long as he is virtuous. Wisdom does not produce the ridiculous effects which the Stoics ascribed to it, but tis a sweet comforter, that takes off very much of the bitterness of all our anxieties.

Fare well my dear Isaac, and let me hear from thee speedily.

LETTER LIX.

Character of the Venetian courtezans.—The nuns and monks of Venice frequent all public diversions.—Heads of the church publicly keep mistresses.—The consequence of a quarrel between the mistress of a patriarch and legate.—Pope's legates often stir up commotions in a state.—The horrid massacre of St. Bartholomew occasioned by one of them sent to Charles IX.—The fidelity of de Givrito Henry II. of France.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Venice—

THIS, in all probability, is the last letter I shall write to thee from Venice; for I reckon to set out the latter end of this week for Ravenna, and from thence to proceed afterwards to Naples. In my way I shall pass through Loretto, and see that church so much boasted of by the Nazarenes, and so much frequented by their pilgrims. The Roman pontiffs have granted so many indulgences to those who go to visit this temple, that by this means they can deliver the souls of all their ancestors out of purgatory.

The courtezans of Venice, whose occupations will not permit them to go in a pilgrimage to Loretto, make use of another expedient for the relief of the dead. They make choice of one day in the week, which they devote to the relief of the souls in purgatory. That day they arm themselves with an austere

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countenance, putting off sports and merriments till the next; every thing in their house has the face of melancholy, and as their good-will alone is not sufficient to engage the monks to pray to God, they say very seriously to such gallants as come to their houses, "Sir, you will be so good as to pay me more than usual to-day, because what I do is for the souls in purgatory." Then they produce several acquittances for prayers, which are hung on a file by their bed-side, to prove that they don't cheat, and that the money they have receiv'd is laid out in prayers and pious foundations. After this prelude is over, they work to some purpose for the salvation of souls. When they have not custom enough upon the days set apart for such a good work, they endeavour to obtain some prayers for the souls of their kindred gratis. And indeed those whom they employ in this office, having a reciprocal need of their assistance, they are not barbarous to one another, but easily compound the matter in such a way that they have no need to disburse any thing.

Thou wilt think the zeal and devotion of these courtezans extraordinary, but at Venice debauchery is reconcil'd to religion in people of all ranks: There's scarce a monk, a priest, abbe, or my lord, but keeps a mistress. When a man is not rich enough to keep a kind lass to himself, he clubs with some friend; and if the purse of both is not sufficient, they take in a third for a partner. In all amorous contracts, the damsel takes care to reserve one day of the week to herself, in honour of some saint.

In this country there are a great many mothers who prostitute their own daughters from a principle of conscience, saying, they do it to furnish them with an opportunity of getting money, that they may have herewithal to turn nuns. Is not that dear Mon-ecca, a pleasant way of becoming virgins? The old Romans never thought of making their vestal dames perform a noviciate in the street Saburra: Nor is the chastity of the Venetian nuns, proof against the strongest attacks; their moral has nothing in it that

is rigid; they are more happy and free than any other women that are of quality; they receive what visitors they please in their parlour, and their conversation has nothing in it that's austere; they hear the monks when they have not better business; yet they don't resolve upon it till they are reduc'd to the last extremity, and when they have absolutely lost all hopes of getting better cullies. Not but there are fryars at Venice, whose fresh complexion and jocund airs, are capable of producing some tender motion in a young woman's heart; but the fate of the monks seems, upon the whole, to be more unhappy at Venice than in the other cities of Italy; however, if they are not so much esteem'd there, they have as much, and more liberty. During the carnival, they enjoy all the pleasures of it; go to the opera, and even sing there, or play upon the instruments in the orchestra, whenever the fancy takes them. They go to the ridottos (places where they play at the famous game of Pharo) at which they bet and lose the church's money, or their own. Nothing that is lawful for the most resolute soldier to do, is disparaging to monkish decency at this place, and the priests themselves are examples of the most infamous debauchery. The mistresses of the principal clergy are proud of their gallants, are pleased that the public shou'd know them, and are as indiscreet in their intrigues as the French fops are in boasting of ladies' favours.

As I was going one day through a street near the square of St. Mark, I saw a young woman at a window, whom I thought so pretty, that I ask'd a Venetian of my acquaintance who she was? "She is," said he, "la gentil donna de l' eminentissimo patriarcha di Venetia. i. e. The charming mistress of his eminency the patriarch of Venice." I made, as thou must well imagine, dear Monceca, a profound obeisance to madam the patriarchess. About thirty steps from thence, I also perceiv'd another very amiable lady, and asking her name likewise, said my friend, "Il primo canonico della chiesa di san Marco e schiavo

e schiavo de la sua bellezza. i. e. The chief canon of St. Mark's church is a slave to her charms." Another bow thou may'st be sure I paid to the mistress of the chief canon of St. Mark. I believ'd I should have no more occasion to ask a third question, but I saw another woman, whom I thought so perfect a beauty, that I could not help repeating the question; "Is this too," said I, "the property of the church?" "You are not mistaken," said he; "questa bellissima donna e la puttana del premicerio, i. e. This pretty lady is the whore of the dean of St. Mark's." "But whence comes it," said I to my friend, "that all the women in this street are fallen to the share of the clergy?" "'Tis" reply'd he, "because they will live almost all hereabouts, and are very glad to be near what they love. Those ladies whom you see, have great interest with the clergy, insomuch that all the young priests make their court to them with very great assiduity."

It happen'd some time ago, that the patriarch's mistress, whom we just now saw, had a quarrel with the mistress of the legate of the sovereign pontiff, which was an affair wherein all the clergy were engag'd and divided. The fryars took part with the legate, and the secular priests with the patriarch. These two illustrious lovers enter'd into the quarrel of their concubines with very great warmth; and that the public might not know the ground of their hatred, they pleaded some punctilios of honour for the pretext, which gave them a handle to thwart each other upon all occasions. The senate, which hated those discussions, and was very studious to keep up peace and union in the republic, signify'd to the court of Rome, that they would do well to send another legate to Venice, which was accordingly comply'd with. The old legate being recall'd, took signiora Clara along with him, and settled her in a very fine house at Rome, where they pass their time happily.

The legates or ambassadors of the sovereign pontiff, are apt to raise troubles, and foment divisions in

in the dominions to which their master sends them. The abominable slaughter on St. Bartholomew's day, was owing to the pernicious counsels of a legate *, sent to Charles IX. king of France; who concerted with that perfidious ambassador the death of the king of Navarre †, and of all the Nazarenes who were not papists. The Roman legate did not care that the king's marriage with the princess Margaret, shou'd be made use of as a pretext for it; but Charles IX. having convinc'd him that it was a sure way to be reveng'd of their enemies, he consented to it without any scruple, every thing being reckon'd good and lawful, provided they cou'd cut the throats of the adversaries of the court of Rome.

Certain Nazarenes, whom I have talk'd with about this action, have endeavour'd to excuse the legate, and to throw the blame upon the king, but the fact is authentically prov'd by an unexceptionable persons, who knew it from persons that had a hand in it *.

Is there any thing so shocking, dear Monceca, as to make the most sacred things subservient to murder and slaughter, and to cover the most pernicious designs with the cloke of friendship and kindred? What a marriage, just God, was this of the king of Navarre! The furies lighted up Hymen's torch, and horror, rage, cruelty, despair, and impiety presidid at the ceremony. "I consent," said Charles IX. to the legate, "to conclude the marriage with the king of Navarre, for no other reason but to be reveng'd on mine enemies,—and to chastise such great rebels." This king, who thirsted

* The cardinal Alexandrin.

† Who was afterwards Henry IV. king of France.

* His holiness added, that when the news of the transaction on St. Bartholomew's day came to Rome, the cardinal Alexandrin said, "God be prais'd! The king of France has kept his word with me." His holiness said, he knew all this by being at that time auditor to the said cardinal; and his companion in the whole journey. Cardinal Ossat's letter from Rome, 22 Sept. 1599.

for the blood of his subjects, offer'd to give the perfidious ambassador a ring, to insure the crime which he was contriving. "But," says an Italian historian, "he refused to take pledges for the security of the word of so great a king; tho', after St. Bartholomew's Day, Charles IX. sent him that ring as a token of his adherence to his oaths *."

Are these dear Monceca, oaths that are fit to be put in execution? The performance of them is even more execrable than the promise. How happy wou'd it have been for France, if Charles IX. had entertain'd the same opinion of the legate, as a French poet put into the mouth of one of his heroes :

—— Non, je ne promis rien.

Le Legat † instrument d'une indigne foiblesse,
S'empara de mon cœur, en dicta la promesse.

S'il ne m'eut inspire ce barbare dessein,

Mon cœur n'auroit jamais promis du sang humain ‡.

i. e. ——— "No, I promise nothing. The legate, a tool of base folly, having won my heart, dictated to it what I shou'd promise. If he had not inspir'd me with that barbarous design, I shou'd never have had the heart to make a promise of shedding human blood."

This passage puts me in mind of another by the same author, which gives him a perfect character of the policy of the court of Rome.

C'est ainsi, qu'en perdant la pere par le fils,
Rome devient fatal à tous ses ennemis §.

i. e. "Thus does Rome, by making the son the executioner of the father, become fatal to all her enemies."

* The life of pope Pius V. by Girolamo Catena, written in Italian, and printed at Rome by Alexander Gerdona in 1583. Catena says, that Charles IX. caus'd this motto to be engrav'd on the ring, *Nec pietas possit mea sanguine solvi.*

† 'Tis in the original Neptune.

‡ Crebillon in *Idomeneus*.

§ Ditto in *Rhadamistus*.

The most crafty and most dangerous policy becomes innocent among the Romans, and all the Italians in general, when 'tis capable of answering their aim. Happy are those nations, dear Monceca, whose politics are only a science to point out the snares that men lay for us, so as we may avoid them, and not to punish one crime by another, and to authorize the foulest deeds!

Another legate, during the wars which Henry IV. was oblig'd to sustain, before he came to the peaceable possession of his throne, did what he cou'd to debauch his majesty's subjects and soldiers; and for this end employ'd promises, menaces, intreaties, and above all indulgences, which are the coin that the court of Rome lays out more freely than any other species. He wou'd fain have decoy'd his general d'Anglure de Givri, and in order to persuade him to abandon the king's cause, he told him of his merit, and the reputation which he had acquir'd. But all his flattering speeches serv'd to no purpose, Givri's loyalty to the king was always steady. The legate perceiving that he cou'd not shake it, exhorted him however, as he profess'd himself a good Nazarene papist, to beg pardon for all that was past of the sovereign pontiff, and of him who was his representative, giving him to understand that he desir'd nothing better than to grant it to him. This Givri, who was naturally a pleasant droll, fell on a sudden at the feet of the legate, and ask'd for pardon with a very contrite air, for all the evils that he had brought upon the Parisians, who were the sovereign pontiff's adherents. During this, the legate wav'd his right-hand over his head, and mutter'd certain words between his teeth, which the Nazarenes call Absolution. But Givri interrupting him, said to him very seriously. "I beg you to grant me Absolution also for the time to come, because I am really resolv'd to treat the enemies of the king my master even worse than ever." Then the legate fretting and fuming to find himself banter'd, revok'd the pardon which he had just granted to Givri, who suffer'd

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him to take back his absolution ; and laughing in his face, he withdrew from him, and continued loyal to his prince *.

If all the Nazarene papists had been as virtuous and as honest as this loyal subject was, France which always submitted to the sovereigns that God set over her, had not fallen a prey to discord and division. Mad superstition in the monastic habit had not forc'd one brother to imbrue his hands in the blood of another, and religion had never serv'd for a cloak to rebellion.

This is a principle, dear Monceca, of which I think every honest man, and every loyal subject must be convinc'd. Tho' a monarch were to turn Turk, the oath of fidelity taken to him ought to be kept sacredly. How ! (methinks I hear some cry out, what when they go to force the conscience ? And can monarchs seated on their thrones chuse what religion they will be of ? Their faith must be at the choice of their subjects : A man must be either a fool, or mad, or romantic, to maintain such an extravagant opinion. If I were a sovereign of a Nazarene country, I would establish a certain temple where I would appoint candid honest laymen to preach up a system of morality, which shou'd be a counterpoise to that of the monks. How happy wou'd it have been for Henry III. and his successor, if there had been such preachers at Paris to balance those of the league, and those that were sent to that city by the pontiffs and the Spaniards ! These latter being eternally at enmity with the French, but always overcome by them in the time of their greatest division, despairing of being ever able to bring them under, employ'd the poison of monkish fury :

* *Genu flexo, supplex & composito vultu, veniam se contra Parisienses admissorum petere professus est ; interpositaque aliqua mora, quasi serio rem gereret, postquam a cardinali benedictionem accepit, antequam surgeret, etiam futurorum gratiam sibi fieri petiit ; nam decrevisse contra Parisienses accedam quam antea bellum gerere : quibus dictis, cum risu se a cardinalis gratiam factam revocantis conspectu subduxit.* Thuanus Tom. IV. p. 154.

Helas ! elle a des rois egorge le plus grand !*

Alas ! it cut the throat of the greatest of kings !

Fare thee well, dear Monceca ; as soon as I can write thou shalt hear from me. May the God of our fathers prosper thee with abundance.

LETTER LX.

An entertaining Conversation between three authors.

AARON MONCECA TO ISAAC ONIS.

Paris.——

I Make no doubt, dear Isaac, but thou art arriv'd by this time at Alexandria. If thou makest any stay there before thou proceedest to Cairo, thou wilt do me a pleasure to write some account to me of the antiquities there, of which I am assured, there is a great number, and that time has spared several pieces which are still preserved intire ; and many more there wou'd have been if the barbarity of the Turks, the fury of war, and the avarice of the inhabitants, had not prov'd the ruin of a great number of structures which have been pull'd down either from a principle of superstition, or from the expectation of gold hid in the foundation, or in their thick walls. A number of columns have been demolish'd in hopes of finding medals under their cases like to those which had already been discover'd under others. Therefore the finest pieces of architecture were inhumanly broke to pieces ; and as to those that are left standing, we are only oblig'd for it to their unshaken solidity.

When I was at Constantinople, I frequently discours'd some Jews that had travell'd to Egypt, who told me a great many things of which I shou'd be glad to know the truth under thy hand. They also

* Racine in *Athalie* :

Helas ! ils ont des rois egare le plus sage !

i. e. Alas ! they have mislead the wisest of kings.

assur'd me that the manners of the Egyptians differ in a great many things from those of the Turks who live at Constantinople, and over all Greece. Inform me therefore, dear Isaac, of all these matters, which I shall be master of with certainty, when I receive the information from a person of thy wisdom and judgment. In exchange for thy intelligence, I will endeavour to give thee some remarks upon the manners and customs of the countries which I shall travel through, after I leave France; for my affairs will be soon finish'd at Paris, so that I purpose to set out from thence in a month or two; and I shall be oblig'd to make a tour into Flanders, and from thence I shall pass over to England.

I cou'd wish that the chevalier de Maifin were to accompany me in the voyage, for I shou'd think myself very happy if I cou'd have so excellent a companion. I have infinite obligations to that gentleman, for he helps me every day to a thorough knowledge of his countrymen, and explains even the minutest difficulties. Yesterday he carried me to the house of an author of his acquaintance, who is reckon'd to have one of the best pens in France: We found him with two other authors in company, and they seem'd all three to be engaged in a very warm dispute; so that they hardly took notice of us when we came into the room. But the chevalier de Maifin presented me to his friend, the three learned gentlemen grew a little calmer when they saw we were come to join them. After compliments were pass'd, the chevalier de Maifin was curious to know what the three learned gentlemen were disputing about. "Gentlemen" said he "may one ask you what is the topic you are debating? Is it metaphysics, mathematics, or natural philosophy? It relates to authorship, said the chevalier's friend, and by consequence is of much more importance to the republic of literature: For the point which is of the greatest advantage and the most essential to the being of scholars, is the means of subsistence; yet this is what the booksellers oppose; and if the government does

not make some regulation for checking their avarice, all authors must be content for the future to enjoy those transparent bodies, that shall require no nourishment. Is it not surprising that a bookseller shou'd allow the abbe Grifonet but six livres a sheet for his romances? six livres! said one of the authors, the very abbe that was mention'd; and if you please M. Tragedin, you may reckon the correcting of the proof-sheets into the bargain. This is abominable! reply'd the chevalier's friend; you dishonour the majesty of the profession of an author, by sinking it to six livres per sheet, including the trouble of correcting. It were a hundred times better to be starv'd to death.

"But M. Tragedin, reply'd the third of those writers who had not yet spoke, you don't consider that venter caret auribus, the hungry belly has no ears. 'Tis a very easy matter for you to preach up the grandeur and dignity which ought to shine in our august character; you have a tolerable income, and may therefore defy the avarice of the booksellers: But if, as it very often happens with me, you had work'd all the day, and had taken but one dish of coffee, and that upon tick at Gardot's*, you wou'd be very glad to let your works go at the price that is bid for them. Indeed you are very happy, M. Poetafter, reply'd the abbe, to have credit at Gardot's: 'Tis now a fortnight since I lost that same favour; for his wife brought me in a bill of two thousand nine hundred and thirty-two dishes of coffee, which not being able to pay, she wou'd give me credit no longer. What, sir, said the chevalier de Maisin do you owe for two thousand nine hundred and thirty-two dishes of coffee? Yes, reply'd the author; I have not given the coffee-man a penny for these nine years past, and one dish a day comes exactly to that accompt, allowing for the leap-years. I thought to have paid off the first years debt out of the money that I should get by a certain

* A coffee-house at the foot of the Pont-neuf, the rendez-vous of pretended wits.

manuscript, but not receiving half the sum that I expected for it, I cou'd not do it. However, I fancy, M. Poetafter, continued the author, that you owe as much as I do; for we were admitted members of Parnassus at the same time, and both of us install'd upon the same day in the coffee-house of wits. That's true reply'd the other author, but foreseeing that the same misfortune might happen to me, as has happen'd to you, I presented the coffee-woman some time ago with a sonnet, in which I prais'd her extravagantly. She gave me six months longer credit, and I hope to be able to pay her in that time, when I shall have finish'd my Universal History in eighteen volumes in folio. I was in hopes my baker would have given me leave to dedicate it to him, on the proviso of supplying me with bread for eight years gratis; but he was deaf to my proposal; for the man is not so fond of immortality as money, mean time I am not at all sorry that I did not strike this bargain with him, because I have another person in view, who will undoubtedly be of more service to me.

" I really fear, reply'd the abbe Grisonet, that you reckon without your host: The financiers are sensible how ridiculous it makes them to dedicate books to them, and that when a knave is prais'd, 'tis done on purpose to expose him the more to the derision of the public. The fine sparks, and the men of quality are almost as much distress'd in their pecuniary affairs, as the authors. The gentlemen of the long robe fancy that they ought to pay nothing for epistles dedicatory, but thanks; and the rich men of wit nothing but praise: And if I may speak my mind, it must soon come to such a pass that authors will be glad to follow the examples of a writer of our time, who only dedicates his books to the shades and manes of the dead.

" I have a subject, said another author who is not in the same case with any of those you mention, I mean the new king of Corsica, who I doubt not will be over-joy'd at his new accession to the crown,

to receive marks of the joy which it gives to the chief members of the commonwealth of learning. I will even make it plain to all Europe in the epistle dedicatory which I shall address to him, that he has lawful rights to Corsica. As to that matter, reply'd the chevalier de Maisin with a smile, you will give me leave to think that you'll find it a hard task to make out a paradox so extraordinary. Pardon me sir, reply'd the author, I'll set about it thus; I will prove in the first place, that in the first government of the Corsicans, bastards were capable of succeeding to the crown. Afterwards I will cause one of the antient princes of Corsica to travel into Germany, where in the county of la Mark he shall be marry'd clandestinely without any formality, and without any other witness but the God of love, with a daughter of the family of Nieuhoff, and consequently upon this first bastard capable of succeeding to the crown of Corsica, I will establish the rights of Theodore I.

" I submit, said the chevalier de Maisin, and I own to you, M. Poetafter, that I cou'd never have thought you wou'd have hit upon such an expedient. The only question now is, whether the new king of Corsica will take it very well that you should derive his pedigree from this bastard; He would be in the wrong to take it amiss, reply'd the author, but to prove to him that 'tis no blot in his escutcheon, I will take care to instance the sultans to him, who are all merry-begotten children, and not born in lawful wedlock.

" I am, said the abbe Grifonet, of M. Poetafter's opinion, and Theodore ought to be satisfied with a vindication of his accession to that crown, let it be perform'd how it will. I wou'd fain, provided it does not disoblige M. Poetafter, and that he thought it wou'd not prejudice the dedication of his Universal History, dedicate to the same monarch the life of prince Eugene, which I shall finish in a day or two. Have you wrote the life of prince Eugene, said the chevalier de Maisin? Yes, sir, reply'd the abbe, I began

began it the very day that his death was published in the gazette. The bookseller for whom I work gave it out every where that I was upon it, for fear my project should be stole from me, and another get the start of me. To be sure, said the chevalier de Maifin, you have had several memoirs communicated to you? I have the Gazettes, and Historical Mercuries, replied the abbe. With these helps only, thanks to God, and to the desire of getting money, I have wrote thirty-two sheets in eleven days and a half, and I am just at the end of my work. But as quick as I write, I work very slowly in comparison with M. Poetafter, who in a year and half wrote his Universal History, for he finished a volume in folio every month; and yet I am assured, that whenever it comes out, it will be esteemed by all good judges.

“ You are too good to me, reply’d the other author, I don’t deserve these praises. Indeed I might perhaps have perform’d something tolerable if I had spent a little more time upon it; but I tax’d myself at three printed sheets a day, which good or bad, I was under a necessity of finishing; for otherwise a man cannot live. In plain terms, such as is the pay, such is the work. As to promoting the sale of the book when tis printed, that’s the booksellers business. If any are left upon their hands in their shops, ’tis so much the worse for them. When I want money, and the work is in haste, I set all my people at work; my wife dictates, my children write, and I revise the whole; and when that’s done, leave it to take its fate.

“ You are a happy man, said the abbe Grifonet, to have such assistance at hand; but I who have neither wife nor children, am obliged to do all myself; but however when a thing is out of my hand, I don’t take the trouble of revising it.

“ I don’t blame you, said the Chevalier de Maifin’s friend, since the booksellers are inclined to screw you to such terms, you are in the right to deal with them as you do. And notwithstanding my ambition for fame, I fancy that I should hurry my work

you do, if I were press'd with hunger; and I own to you that I am oblig'd for half my genius to the tranquility of my stomach, which I can satisfy before I take pen in hand."

I know not, dear Isaac, how thou relishest the conversation of these authors, but I thought it so ridiculous that I cou'd not help imparting it to thee.

Fare thee well; and let me have the pleasure of hearing from thee oftener.

LETTER LXI.

Conversation between the Chevalier de Maisin, and a Bookseller.—A letter from the bookseller to a journalist.—Observations thereon, and on books and writers in general.—The miserable state of bad authors, described

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris——

AS I went from the author's house that I mentioned in my last, the chevalier de Maisin desired me to go with him to a bookseller in St James-street, where he wanted to buy some books. When he arriv'd at his shop he found him very angry, and scolding at his wife, child, 'prentices, &c. What's the matter, Sir, said he to him, you seem to be very much out of temper? "What's the matter, Sir, answered the Bookseller, I wish that all authors and correctors too were at the devil, and that the whole race of them had been extinct a hundred years ago. But pray tell me, said the chevalier de Maisin, what is it makes you so uneasy? Perhaps I might be of some service to you. I will tell you, said the bookseller, and leave you to judge whether such an accident could have happened to me if I had not been born under a very unlucky planet.

"You know the History of Thuanus or M. de Thou, 'tis really a very good book; I had undertaken to reprint a translation of it, corrected and enrich'd with notes. But surely the devil was in the wind, for

for all my projects are vanished in smoke, and my money is evaporated to nothing. I had contracted with an author for this work at nine-hundred livres, and thought I had made an excellent bargain. I pray now hear what happened; the author who undertook to revise this historian, did not understand Latin, and talk'd very bad French. In order to supply those defects, he took a German into partnership with him, who indeed understood a little Latin, but his French was a very bad jargon. These two cursed authors set about the work, and in the mean time I advanced my money to them at six and four pistoles at a time: At last, after having given them near three hundred livres, I wanted to see how it was performed before I paid any more. Therefore, I caus'd some of the tomes which were put into my hands as perfect and correct, to be revised: They who examin'd them found them detestable: The old translation was marred instead of mended; and the new one was neither French, Dutch, Italian nor Spanish: In short, there was no guessing what language those two damn'd blotters of paper wrote in; yet twas visible that their idiom was rather Gascon, or that of Provence, than any other. In a rage I rescued my work from such bad hands; but I can't be easy for the loss of my money, and am resolved to fall out hereafter with all authors right or wrong*.

* A Dutch bookseller having a mind to reprint the French translation of M. de Thou, which was published at Paris some time ago, apply'd to a rascal, one Damas of Provence, [See les Caprices de l'Amour de la Fortune; or Adventures of Rosalina, p. 137.] who had been forc'd to fly to Holland, because a warrant had been issued to apprehend him for some vile pranks he had committed under an attorney to whom he was clerk. This man, who understood Latin no more than the water-carriers at Paris understand Hebrew, had the assurance to undertake to revise it; and having taken a German partner, who hardly understood a word of French, the first things that happened to fall under his pen were spoiled. In what hands are not the works of the greatest men sometimes trusted? This revision was afterwards put in the hands of two other botchers, as incapable as the former to do any manner of good with it. With such zeal and gratitude do certain booksellers serve the public, that has enriched them.

Your

Your anger, said the chevalier de Maifin, will be over; and I am sure that you wou'd not care to be embroiled with the journalists, tho' it were even with those of Trevoux, whose works are not to be met with now, but in the shops of grocers and chandlers. You are too much afraid of having the books which you print, criticiz'd. True it is, said the bookseller, that I am forced to keep fair with those journalists. but I don't love them a whit the better for it. If they commend my books, I know the cost of it full well; and there's not a single extract for which I don't give a pistole. You have, reply'd the chevalier de Maifin, the pleasure of having a very pitiful performance often recommended as an excellent book. There's a great many ninnies who seriously believe the journalists to be oracles, and upon their bare approbation pay dear for their worst books. 'Tis certain that you poison the public with the insipid productions of three or four bad authors; but in the republic of letters this crime is not punished. Sad authors are permitted to write books, fools to read them, and booksellers to put them off for as much as they can. Why how should we live else, said the bookseller. What would become of that swarm of authors and correctors that subsist only by the silly stuff with which they stain paper? In all callings there are quacks; bad authors are quacks in the commonwealth of learning; tho' their drugs often sell better than the compositions of greater men. But now you talk of the journal, continued the bookseller, I forgot that I have a letter here which I must send to a journalist. Pray permit me to read it, said the chevalier, I promise you to be secret, and will engage the same for my friend. The bookseller did not want to be importun'd, but opened the letter, and gave it to the chevalier de Maifin, who was so diverted with it, that he copy'd it on the spot. The bookseller indeed, at first oppos'd it, but at last he comply'd upon the chevalier's repeated assurance, that he would never divulge it as long as he liv'd.

A L E T.

A LETTER from S——*, the bookseller, to
his journalift.

“S I R,

MY apprentice will give you ten pistoles to discharge the debt to the journal for the present three months; but I tell you very freely that I am not hugely satisfy'd with your way of writing, and if it holds, I must provide myself elsewhere. You praise my books too faintly, and are not severe enough upon those of my brethren. Endeavour in your criticisms and your invectives to imitate the Journalists de Trevoux; mind how they tear to pieces, right or wrong, all works that come from the pen either of a Janfenist or a Protestant. Those are models for your imitation: but it seems as if you piqued yourself on some remains of modesty, and that you are afraid to declare openly that an excellent book is good for nothing. Deal ingenuously with me always. Have not those same Journalists de Trevoux, that I mentioned to you as one of the examples which you ought to follow, have not they ventured two or three times to condemn certain works of Bayle and Boileau for no other reason but because they did not love the authors? As for you, let avarice supply the place of hatred. Consider of it, Sir; if you are afraid to tell a lye, that's to yourself; but for my part, I don't pay you for telling the truth, but to commend the books which I undertake to print, the bad as well as the good, and to find fault with all that may hinder the sale of 'em. It seems you are for imitating the probity and sincerity of Bayle, and Sallo. 'Tis at your own option, Sir, to do as they do; but you will be so good as to look out for another bookseller, as I shall do for another journalist. However, Sir, if you are willing that we should continue to have any dealings together, try to am-

* ——— Quid rides? mutato nomine de te
Fabula narratur.

Hor. Sat.
yourself

yourself with a little more brass, and in the present journal which you are now at work upon, be so good as to lash the performances of the marquis d'Ar—, not only those he has already published, but those that he shall publish hereafter, tho' you know nothing either of the titles or the subjects. Take and tear to pieces all the tracts that are printed for the booksellers N—— and P——, they are Jansenists, enemies to God and the government, and what's worse than all, mine. Get an exact account of the books written by the Molinists of any eminence; cry them up to the third heaven, and especially those that you find written by the Jesuits, tho' it be even by their lay-brothers. Criticise the new tragedy of Voltaire with severity, and don't fail to reproach him bitterly for his having no religion, tho' perhaps you have less yourself. You need be in no pain about that, it being only a reproach which it is necessary to cast upon that author to stir up the wrath of all bigots against him, and indeed of all people that don't know him. The reverend father the rector told me yesterday that he cannot be punished too much for having propagated the venom of Jansenism in his *Henriade*, and his *Œdipus*.

I am, Sir, &c."

Without doubt, dear Isaac, thou wilt be diverted with this letter, and think as the chevalier de Maisin and I do, that tis an original of its kind. We banter'd the bookseller heartily on the praise that he was for bestowing upon sorry books. If, said he, none but good books were printed, half the booksellers in the world must starve, and the other half would have much ado to live. There are few people that can discern a good book from a bad one: If it be but a new one, we find a way to put it off; we take care to get a pompous character of it display'd in the journals, and the public who are always the admirers and dupes of novelty, buy the good and bad indifferently."

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F

Thou

Thou wilt not be so much surprized, dear Isaac, at what the bookseller said, if thou dost but consider, that there are few people who are able to distinguish solid beauties from tinsel and false brilliancy. A book which is perfectly methodical, and in which the beauty of the sentiments is answerable to the regularity of the subjects, does not strike the imagination of some people so much as another, that has here and there certain sprightly, shining fallies of wit, tho' they are not continued, but like to those meteors which blaze on a sudden as if they would set the whole world on fire, and in a moment are extinct. The women especially are very fond of books which captivate their attention on account of some extraordinary adventure. The sublimity and grandeur of subjects, and the beauty of diction does not amuse them so much as what is marvellous and extraordinary. And tis plain that they had much rather read romances than books of history, tho' such as are for adding *Utile Dulci*, seldom find that mixture in romances. I could wish that in the title page of such books there was the motto which is prefixed to the ancient *Amadis*, *Lis & Oublie*, i. e. read and forget; for tho' the reading of works of this sort is amusing, yet the remembrance of them is pernicious; for it leaves a tenderness on the heart which softens it, and gives the mind a certain taste for adventures which are dangerous to young people, and apt to lead them very much astray.

I would not be mistaken as if I was entirely against the reading of romances; my zeal does not carry me so far as that comes to; but I would have them read only as an amusement, and not as a serious affair; and that they should be considered as pleasant dreams, invented to give some little amusement to men of business, and to unbend the minds of those who apply themselves to serious studies. Then the romance would become an innocent pleasure, and people would no longer spend months together in reading a medley of enchantments, amours, duels, combats, assassinations, treachery, coquetry, and knavery. The

profitable

Profitable would be joined with the Delightful, and the reading of books of history, morality, and rational philosophy would be the basis for men to build on, that are desirous of knowledge. Tis true, that this refinement of the taste would be a mortal blow to the generality of authors; and many writers who pick up a livelihood from some ill-digested scraps of history, which they commit to the press, would perhaps be reduced to turn shoemakers. But if it were so, where would be the harm? There wou'd be only the fewer bad authors, and shoes would be the cheaper. The government and the republic of letters wou'd both be the better for this new regulation. The latter would get rid of bad subjects, that are a disgrace to it, and the kingdom would find an increase of its artificers; and perhaps the authors too would be overjoyed that they had changed their condition: for how many shoemakers are there that live better than writers? And how many of the latter, that were it not for the goodness of those shoemakers to give them credit, would go barefoot? Let their thirst for fame be what it will, they would soon be sensible, that a mechanic, who has nobody to molest him, and is sure of three meals a day, is a hundred times happier than an author who depends for his subsistence upon an epistle dedicatory, or a sonnet.

But from what I say to thee, dear Isaac, thou must not imagine that all authors in France are so unfortunate, and that there are no persons who subsist by their merit and learning. As soon as a writer distinguishes himself by any talent, he is fortified against the frowns of fortune. Tis true that he never becomes rich, but in short he is so well paid for his works, that he can afford to live handsomely. The misery that I have been speaking of, is confined only to bad authors, who commence such purely for bread, and who miscarrying in their aim, generally starve. They make a shift to live for a little while on some money which they get from the booksellers.

lers ; but sooner or later this supply fails ; and then it wou'd be happy for them, as I have already said, that they cou'd be shoe-makers, or even coblers ; for in such a calling they would not be liable to the misery in which they now pine. Fare thee well, dear Isaac, and may the God of our Fathers give thee wealth and prosperity in abundance.

L E T T E R LXII.

The folly of being fond of an author merely because he is an antient writer, ridiculed.—There are three sorts of works, which are snares laid to entangle reason.—The beauties and defects of the best antient and modern writers fairly and impartially considered.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris ———

TH O' I take such care, dear Isaac, to be acquainted with the manners and customs of the French, yet I apply several hours of the day to study. I am assiduous to complete, or at least to augment, the little knowledge that I have acquired, and I endeavour to avoid every thing that may obscure, or render it less clear and difficult. I am careful to observe a rule, and to follow a method which may make the knowledge of the truth easy for me. I am of opinion, that the extravagant respect which men pay to the Antients, produces two pernicious effects ; it accustoms them to make no use of their own talents, and by little and little incapacitates them to make use of their reason. They who spend their whole lives in reading of Aristotle and Plato, don't take so much pains to reconcile the opinions of those philosophers with truth, and to reject those which have the contrary appearance, as to know them all in general, and blindly to defend and embrace them, without requiring any other proofs of them than their being in the works of those Antients.

And

Another dangerous consequence, that sometimes attends the reading of the antients, is the wild confusion into which it throws the ideas of such as apply themselves to it, without knowing how they ought to behave in a study of this kind. 'Tis very profitable to read the antients, when a person ruminates on what he reads, when he reflects on the sentiments that are discernable in their works, and when the Greek and Roman authors, great men as they were, are consider'd nevertheless as meer human beings, and by consequence liable to commit faults : Then a person may be capable of improving very much ; for when a man is over and above fond of a writer, only because he is one of the antients, and makes it his chief aim to know every thing that he believ'd, without troubling himself with what is really necessary to be believ'd, that's acting as indiscreetly as a man who shou'd prefer an old brass medal, defac'd and spoil'd, to a piece of modern gold, finely engrav'd, and the more valuable by reason of its weight. Is there any thing so precious as the truth ? And can all the credit which an author may have acquir'd in two thousand years, turn the balance against reason and evidence ?

'Tis the common folly of all commentators, to deify the defects and errors of the antients : They fancy that the praise they give to the authors on whom they comment, recoils in part upon themselves ; and an annotator is apt to look upon his author and himself but as one and the same person. " Upon this supposition, self-love plays its part admirably, and shares in the license which it sets a smoking to the glory of another.*" The most singular thing of all is, that the commentators don't only commend their authors because they esteem them, but also because 'tis the custom and fashion establish'd by long usage. A commentator wou'd pass among his brethren as a novice in the subjects he treats of, if he did not praise the book and the merit of its author far beyond the truth.

* Mallebranche's Search after Truth, part. ii. cap. 4. p. 200.

There are three sorts of works that are calculated to lay snares for our reason and understanding, by prepossessing them with false ideas, viz. Commentaries, Journals, and Prefaces.

As it wou'd be ridiculous for a person to say, that he is employ'd on an insignificant or trifling subject, the commentators always give notice that they are illustrating or explaining a divine author of the first rank, with a capacious, profound, and penetrating genius, who was the admiration of the age in which he liv'd, and of all ages since. The jest of it is to find the same commentator who is employ'd upon two authors, whose sentiments are directly opposite, contradicting himself in every article, and extolling an opinion to the skies, which he had damn'd to the lowest pit of hell.

The journalists blame or commend a work, just as the bookseller, who is at the expence of printing the journal, is interested in the approbation or censure of it.

An author endeavours in a preface to impose on his reader, and dazzle his eyes, insomuch that there's hardly one to be met with, which is conformable to truth and good sense.

Therefore, dear Isaac, 'tis my opinion, that in order for a man to pass solid judgment on the merits of a book, whether antient or modern, 'tis absolutely necessary he should read it without prejudice or prepossession; that he shou'd first reconcile his opinions with reason, and then with the works of great men; that he shou'd examine those passages which may appear obscure or doubtful to us, reject those which we plainly see to be false, and adopt those with pleasure which inform us and shew us the truth, or which serve to corroborate the knowledge of what we were acquainted with before. That's the only way of judging solidly of the goodness of a work, and all other proofs are either false or uncertain.

The generality of mankind judge of the goodness of a book only from the reputation of the author; which, 'tis true, is a strong prepossession in its favour, but

but yet 'tis not a mark that is infallible. Scot, and many other scholastic authors, had a surprizing reputation in their time, but are since fallen into such contempt, that they are hardly so much as known by some monks. General praise no further ascertains the goodness of a work, than as such commendation of it is just and equitable, and as it is founded on the mature reflection of the persons that pronounce it.

Nor is the sale of a book any better proof of its goodness. As the number of people that read trifling and puerile performances, is far greater than those who apply themselves seriously to study, the *Bigar-rues de des Accords*, or, the *Discords of Concords*, have been printed much oftener than the works of Descartes and Gassendi; and the poetry of father de Cerceau, than the poem of St. Prosper by M. de Saci.

A book ought not to be reckon'd a whit the better for its being scarce. The writings of Vanini are very scarce, and so are many other books written by libertines; whereas the works of Cicero, Quintilian, and Plato, are very common. Shall it therefore be said, that these are indifferent authors, and but little in request? On the contrary, most good books are very common, and the bad ones scarce to be met with. "The reason of it is plain," says a modern author, "good books are often printed, and the bad ones but once or twice at most, and that's all."

The French were prepossess'd, dear Isaac, to such a degree towards the close of the last century, and the beginning of this, that if an author was but antient, he needed nothing more to have a number of advocates, who cry'd up his faults for perfections. On the other hand, several persons were so far prejudiced in favour of the modern writers, that they approve of nothing, and thought nothing of the antients good. A man cannot give into such extravagant notions, without being a fool, a madman, and excessively ignorant. There is a just medium in things. The antients had their faults, but then they had great beauties; and there are some of 'em whom the moderns cou'd

cou'd never come up to. This is the method which I think the properest for settling the dispute about this difference.

Aristotle, Plato, Epicurus, and the other antient philosophers were very bad naturalists, compar'd to Gassendi, Descartes, Newton, &c. and sorry metaphysicians compar'd to Locke and Mallebranche. Their notions as to moral philosophy, were as perfect as ours; of the truth of which fact, Tully's offices are an invincible proof. They were mere ignoramus's, or but little better, as to astronomy, navigation, and geography; but in point of history they have outdone us. Father Paul, M. de Thou, Rapin Thoyras, are even far short of that perfection which we find in the fragments that are left us of Sallust and Tacitus; and they are far inferior to Titus Livy, Thucydides, and Xenophon, be the performance of the latter ever so inconsiderable.

The beauties of Tasso, Milton, Voltaire, are not equal to those of Homer and Virgil; not but the poems of the antients have their faults as well as the modern, but they have so much of the good, the sublime, the marvellous, that certain faults are hardly visible, or at least are easily pardon'd*. Gaurini's Pastor Fido, Fontenelle's Eclogues, and some of those of Segrais are perhaps preferable to the works of Theocritus; but in Virgil's works there are Eclogues which outweigh them, and perhaps totally eclipse them.

The tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides are very beautiful; but a man who is not an idolizer of antiquity, does not perceive so much of the brilliant, nor so many charms, and so much of the soft and sublime at the same instant, as in those of Corneille

* It must be allow'd, that there are great defects in Homer's poems. But a man must be either very ignorant or prejudic'd, not to perceive their charming beauties. Such is the Iliad, of which I shou'd rather chuse to have been the author, than of all La Motte's works, and I will venture to say, than (excepting Fontenelle's) of all the compositions of the members of the French academy; I mean the French academy in its present state, in 1737.

and Racine. There are even some French poets that come a vast way behind those two illustrious moderns, but never theless may compare with the antient Greek tragedians: The Ariana of Thomas Corneille, the Rhadamistus of Crebillon, the three last acts of Voltaire's Oedipus, and his Brutus, are equal perhaps to the Electra of Euripides, and the Oedipus of Sophocles. As to the Italians, their theatrical performances are detestable. It seems, that Italy was never capable of producing any genius, who could treat a tragic subject as it shou'd be. Seneca's pieces, which remain to us at this day, don't come up to those of Pradon; and we shou'd have been very much oblig'd to our ancestors, if they had left us some better composition in the room of it.

As for comedy, that of the antients and the moderns is pretty equal. Aristophanes, Menander, Plautus, Terence, may be match'd with don Lopez de la Vega, Moliere, and some good English authors of that kind. Yet I think if the point was examin'd critically and impartially, after mature reflection, one might be determin'd perhaps to give the moderns the preference.

Several authors have composed very fine elegies, and some pieces of gallantry in these latter times. The countess of Suza has succeeded perhaps better than all of 'em; but her works don't come near those of Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius. The ode was carry'd by the Greeks and Romans to such a pitch of perfection as it never has arrived to since. There is no comparison between Pindar, Horace, and Anacreon, and Malherbe, Rousseau and la Motte; not but the latter have many beauties. Rousseau especially set out in such a manner, that the advocates for the moderns entertain'd hopes that he would one day or other equal Horace. But it seems that the same arret which blasted his reputation, extinguish'd his genius; for after he was banish'd from France, he did not write a piece that was worthy of the vivacity and penetration of the Brabanders. And his muse, tho' applauded at Brussels, is actually his'd every

every where else in Europe, by every man that has the least notion of French poetry.

As to eloquence, we are very much inferior to the antients. Bossuet, Flechier, Patrou, la Maitre, Bourdaloue, had neither the force. nor fire, nor the sublime of Demosthenes; nor have they come up to the majesty, grandeur and dignity of Cicero. Modern Italy has produc'd no orator of distinction; and all its preachers are rather scaramouches, buffoons and harlequins, who divert their hearers by puns and conundrums, than men that pretend to reach the heart, and to captivate the minds of their hearers by their eloquence.

This is what I think, dear Isaac, may be said without the least partiality as to the dispute between the antients and the moderns. That's the opinion of all the learned men who make use of their reason, and don't abandon themselves entirely to the prejudices which they may have imbib'd in their infancy. The regents in the colleges generally inspire their scholars with the utmost contempt for all authors, whose works are not fifteen hundred years old. That was the time, say they, when men had the freedom of thinking; but since that, they have been forbid to make use of their understanding. Young people accustom themselves by little and little to think after this manner, and don't care to have their opinion contradicted, or so much as examin'd. They never look into books that they hear run down; and when they are come to a certain age, their prejudices are so strong that they look into modern authors in hopes of finding arguments to diminish the beauties that strike them. How many people that are charm'd with the poetry, and noble bold sentiments of Voltaire, yet condemn his *Henriade* without a desire to distinguish the beauties from the defects; and this only because they fancy that a modern cannot write a good epic poem? But I wou'd fain ask them, whether they believe that in antient days men had two heads, two souls, two understandings, four hands, and four feet? If so, to be sure none of the moderns

derns can ever vie with the antients. But if like us they had but one soul, and one understanding, I doubt not but there still may be found a genius as good as that of Virgil, except he that form'd it reveal'd to them that hereafter he would produce no more men who should attain to that perfection.

Fare thee well dear Isaac; live content and happy, and may heaven grant thee health and wealth. Pray write to me as soon as thou canst.

L E T T E R LXIII.

An account of the famous temple of Loretto.—The tradition concerning it.—People flock to it from all parts.—Their odd manner of travelling; and whimsical behaviour at the temple.—A description of the city of Naples.—Character of the Neapolitans.—Magnificence of their temples and buildings.—Some remarkable instances of the stupidity and superstitious credulity of the people.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Naples —

TIS now six days, dear Monceca, since I arrived at Naples. But before I acquaint thee with what observations I have already made in this city, I will give thee some particulars of what I saw going to Loretto. The Nazarenes pretend that the temple of that city was carry'd thither by angels. 'Twas a house in a village of Nazareth in Judæa, which, as they say, was first brought to Dalmatia, and pitch'd upon the mountain of Tersallo, where for some time it rested. From thence the same angels carry'd it farther, and set it down in a forest near the marquifate of Ancona. At length, after two or three turns more, it was carried for good and all to the place where it now stands: And the Nazarenes to fix it there intirely, and to prevent it from rambling any more about for the future, have built a magnificent temple with which it is inclosed.

The

The priests who serve in this temple pretend that the house is built of stones that are quite unknown. But I must tell thee, that after having examined the thing, I plainly perceived that it was built of bricks, and certain grey reddish stones, which are nothing more than what are very common. These stones and bricks are so ill joined together, that it is plain the mason's work was done in very great haste. People come to Loretto from all the countries in the world; for all the Nazarene papists have as great a veneration for this place, as we have for Jerusalem; and some years ago, during the Easter-Hollidays there were at Loretto near two-hundred-thousand pilgrims, men and women; but pleasure and joy have as great a share as devotion in the travels of the greatest part of both sexes to it. They make parties for Loretto all over Italy, just like parties for a ball. The monks and nuns repair thither in crouds, dress'd in odd fantassical habits. When the way is a little too long, the people ride thither on the backs of asses, which are reputed to have a smack of sanctity, like the camel that brought the Alcoran to Mecca. They have the talent and virtue never to stumble, and are very tractable like their brother species; but they have far more penetration, so that the rider may let them go where they will, without fear of their rambling out of the road.

The chief ceremony of the pilgrims when they come, is a procession round the temple upon their knees, which is the pleasantest sight in the world. Imagine, dear Aaron, thou wast to see two or three hundred school-boys hopping upon one leg, one after another, and when one tumbles, he that's next behind falls over him. Just so it happens to the pilgrims of Loretto, who vie which shall creep nearest to the wall of the temple; so that some going one way, and others meeting them, it happens very often that they jostle one another, and before their devotion is over, they fall to kick and cuff.

If thou shouldst ask me, dear Monceca, when and how I think this structure was built, it will not

an easy task for me to give thee a very clear account. All that I can assure thee with any certainty is, that this pretended miracle happening in the pontificate of one Boniface, a cunning, sharp, complaisant man, capable of putting the greatest designs in execution, and withal excessively covetous, tis probable that in one night several workmen built that fabric, which they say was brought from Nazareth, and which at most is but one room, very small and low. This too is the more probable, because at that time there was no habitation for above a league from the place where the temple of Loretto actually stands. At the time when the story of the sudden arrival of this house was given out, the Nazarenes were plunged in such gross ignorance, and so besotted with superstition, that they were ready blindly to believe any thing, ever so contrary to sense and reason, But I really question, whether such a miracle wou'd make its fortune now, or at least, whether it would meet with any defenders except in Italy.

So much, dear Monceca, for Loretto. I come now to speak of Naples, where I have already seen a great many fine places since I came. This city has been so often ravaged, that most of its antiquities have been destroyed or damag'd; however the ruins of an amphitheatre are still to be seen, and two or three fronts of old temples which are appropriated to the embellishment of new ones that have been built upon the foundations and ruins of the others.

Naples is one of the biggest and finest cities in Europe, and even seems to have the advantage of Rome, London, Paris, and Venice. Tis in the general regular and beautiful; those other cities have indeed many grand houses, but then they are interspersed with low ones, or such as are ill built and disagreeable to the view.

The Neapolitans are reckon'd the worst and wickedest people in Europe. There was a time when a couple of crowns was a market-price for a man's life; and there were above three thousand banditti in the kingdom that had the assurance to make a stand

against regular troops, which were at infinite trouble to extirpate the race of them. But at length the Spaniards, and after them the Germans have almost intirely purg'd the state of all those miscreants; for they put a great number of them to death, and struck the others with such a terror, that they have been forced to lay themselves under a restraint, and to change their way of life.

The Neapolitans formerly lov'd the Spaniards very much, but abhorred the French and hated the Germans. Their way of thinking seems now to be partly changed: Of this they have given several proofs since the last war; and at present I think it may be said, that they still abhor the French, and hate the Spaniards, but love the Germans. This is the taste of all Italy: tho' I can't imagine what it is that makes the people such friends to the Germans. As for a German officer indeed I am not at a loss to think why he is better belov'd by an Italian than a French officer: For the German drinks his landlord's wine, and takes possession of the best apartment in the house without much ceremony; whereas the Frenchman on the contrary makes a thousand cringes, lies in the barn rather than fail; spends the little money he has in feasts and presents, but caresses the women; which last is a capital crime among the Italians. But they hate the Spaniards from a different cause; tho' since their humours sympathize pretty much, being bigots and slaves alike to the monks and zealous servants to the holy office, tis surprizing that they should be more in love with the severity of the Germans, which keeps them under very great restraint.

As there are few people in Italy so wicked as the Neapolitans, so there are few that are so ignorant and stupid. They seem to make no other use of their reason, than to give a relish to their vice; for unless some wicked action is in hand, a Neapolitan has little more sense than a beast. This gross ignorance prevails even among the people of distinction, and tis really surprizing to see how shallow they are! The

can tell how many temples there are in Naples; which are the saints days; what streets the processions go through; what coffee-houses people meet at; and that is all they know. The other day as I was in one of those coffee-houses, I heard a Neapolitan nobleman ask a question of a Frenchman, which will enable thee to judge of the understanding of his peers: He asked very seriously if the harbour of Paris was as handsome as that of Naples, and if the king's ships rode in it? I am willing to think that all the other noblemen are not quite such fools; but in general there is no ignorance like to that of a Neapolitan nobleman.

Most of the grandees of the country reside commonly at Rome; they pass some time every year at Naples, and after that season is over, they go back again. They are in the right to think Rome a much more agreeable place to reside in; for there is no comparison betwixt the two cities.

The temples at Naples are magnificent beyond all expression; they are adorned from top to bottom with marble, porphyry, gold, silver, brass, and magnificent painting; and those of Rome, unless we except St. Peter's, are not better than those of this city. One of the chief was built, as the Nazarenes say, upon account of a great miracle; for at Naples, as in the rest of Italy, scarce any thing is done, in which the saints are not remarkably concerned. They say therefore, that the Devil, in the shape of a hog, walk'd every day regularly in the place where the temple is built; and that he frightened the inhabitants to such a degree, that they ran away, and the city was by degrees quite deserted. This devil of a hog made a terrible grunting. He spent his time better than in turning up the ground with his snout; for when he caught any person, especially such as had not taken care to give charity to the poor mendicant friars, he maltreated them, and reduced them to a condition which endanger'd their lives. One Pomponius, who was at that time pontiff of Naples, consulted a female saint for whom he had a very great devotion, and she

order'd him to build a temple for her in the very place where the hog used to take his recreation. As soon as the first foundation-stone of this edifice was laid, the devil disappear'd for ever; and the pontiff caused a brazen hog to be made, which is kept in the vestry of this temple, to preserve the remembrance of so illustrious a miracle,

There are several things in this city that are every whit as surprizing. In a certain convent of monks there's a picture, by which the painter pretended to represent the deity, in conversation with one Thomas d'Aquinas. But all these prodigies are mere trifles, compared to what happens here every year in the principal temple, which they call the cathedral: The blood of one Januarius, stopp'd up in a bottle, boils as often as they bring it near the shrine in which his body lies. When this miracle is slow in the operation, and tis necessary to present the bottle several times to the shrine, the people take it for a threatening of the greatest dangers. If Januarius shou'd not happen to be in the humour to let his blood boil at all, there wou'd perhaps be some strange revolution in the city. 'Tis true that the viceroys of Naples order the priests very seriously to see that the miracle has its operation, and tell them they shall be answerable for the success of it. Some years ago the bottle not bubbling as soon as it used to do, the people ran raving about the streets like mad folks; but at length the miracle operated, and a calm succeeded.

Is it possible, dear Monceca, that men shou'd be so ignorant and silly as to give into such chimeras, and for others to be so knavish as to endeavour thus to abuse the credulity of the vulgar? What would the Nazarenes say of us, if we gave into such errors? What piles of tracts wou'd be written against us? How ridiculous would their authors make us? How bitterly would they reproach us? "Ye silly people (they would say to us) what a part do you make the Divinity to perform? Has he need of such mummeries? Lift up your eyes to Heaven, See how the sun
repea

repeats with gigantic strides its daily race. These are tokens worthy of the grandeur of the almighty. Have you forgot, that he has forbid you by his law to make yourself the likeness of any thing in heaven above, or upon the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth? Dash your vial therefore in pieces, and the image which you think has the power of making this blood to boil. Remember that the God of your fathers even punish'd the children for the wickedness of their parents." Such would be the language of the Nazarenes to us. But if they themselves do a thing, 'tis always virtuous and laudable. Infallibility is their portion, and error and confusion ours.

Fare thee well, dear Monceca, and let me have the delight to hear from thee.

L E T T E R L X I V .

Character of Voltaire.—That of his enemies ; particularly Rousseau.—Observations on Voltaire's tragedy of Alzira.—Its beauties pointed out.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris——

A Poet, of whom I have often made mention to thee, has lately enrich'd the theatre with a new tragedy which is beautiful, moving, well conducted, well diversify'd, and full of noble and bold sentiments. Before I communicate some reflections to thee which I have made upon the subject of this piece, and that thou may'st the better relish 'em, 'tis necessary for me to say one word to thee concerning the author's character.

Voltaire (which is his name) is of a lively penetrating bold genius ; he is an excellent versifier, a better philosopher than poets are generally, a man of honour, affable, and without ceremony in society, but prepossess'd in favour of a man of wit, that he esteems a truly learned man far beyond an ancient nobleman, who has no other merit than his title or

extraction. The little regard he has shewn upon some occasions to persons of the first rank, has brought dangerous enemies upon his back. He writes with such a bold pen, and sometimes gives such a public rebuke to superstition, that the monks, their emissaries and those who don't love him, give it out all over Europe, that he has no religion at all. Nevertheless in all his works there is a spirit of candor and humanity, which plainly shews that he is thoroughly convinc'd of the existence of a God, who is good, just and sovereignly powerful; and even some of those pieces, for which he is most bitterly reproach'd, and in which he constantly denies his having any share, are full from the beginning to the end of the praises which all men are oblig'd in gratitude and duty to ascribe to the Divinity.

That which is surprizing in this country is, the fury with which people attempt, tho' without proofs, to charge certain books and writings upon persons that disavow them. Thou would'st be deceiv'd if thou thought'st that in France an author was only responsible for his own works; he is accountable for all that the public and his enemies are pleased to impute to him. The vulgar has condemn'd twenty writers for pieces in which they never had the least hand. But what will astonish thee more, is the spite which certain mean authors, the vile excrements of Parnassus, bear to all those that are distinguish'd for their merit and learning. They surfeit the town with an inundation of satyrs, find fault with the best books without any decorum, launch out into invectives in coffee-houses, and other public places, and by meer dint of clamour they sometimes gain the belief of the credulous part of the public; like to the ravens, which by their croaking, silence the song of the dear nightingale, or drown its melody.

One of Voltaire's bitterest slanderers, is a monster spew'd up out of hell for the punishment of all authors who have any reputation, and value themselves upon their honour. Rousseau, which is the name of this brother of Alecto, with his quiver of calumny

wounded

wounded every man that had any merit, with his arrows; and tho' he was the enemy of all mankind, his hatred raged with the more violence against those that he thought the most deserving of esteem. So many crimes, in short, brought all France upon his back: The government thought itself bound in interest to destroy a villain and a madman; he was condemn'd by an arret of the parliament of Paris, and if he had not fled for it, he wou'd have suffer'd the just punishment of his crimes by the hand of the hangman. He wander'd a long while from one kingdom to another; and his genius and talent for poetry made him welcome at first to those that did not know him. But like to the viper in *Æsop*, he flew at his benefactors as soon as they had rescued him from the miserable plight to which he was reduc'd by his rambles. At last, being weary of his crimes, tho' not satiated, he stay'd some time without rousing his poisonous serpents; but then like an implacable fury, from his retreat he bespatter'd all good authors, whom he hated the more by reason of his banishment. That, dear Isaac, was one of Voltaire's principal adversaries; and by him you may judge what the others were.

I come now to Voltaire's tragedy of *Alzira*, which is a piece I take to be conducted with a great deal of art and learning. The attention of the audience is suspended and animated even to the last scene; and the fifth act furnishes such distress, as is very moving. I will give thee an idea of the piece and of the characters of the chief actors.

Alvarez, the father of Guzman, governour of Peru, opens the scene with his son, and tells him of the grant which he has receiv'd from the council at Madrid to resign his employment to him. He intreats him to release some prisoners that were apprehended the day before, and acquaints him how he was sav'd in a battle by one of them, an American youth. Don Guzman is loth to follow his father's advice. The characters of don Alvarez and don Guzman are unravell'd perfectly well in this first scene, and their conversation makes the audience absolute masters of the subject

subject of the piece. Guzman, when he grants life to the prisoners of his father, who is as good-natur'd and as compassionate to the unfortunate, as his son is proud, haughty and cruel, intreats him to try what he cou'd to turn the heart of Alzira (the Potosi) whom he is to marry. In the same act we are inform'd by Alzira herself, that she had been promis'd to Zamor, an American prince, and that she was just going to be join'd to him in matrimony, when the cruel Guzman came and separated her from a lover whom she ador'd. In repeating the account of her misfortunes to her father Monteza, while he was pleading with her in favour of Guzman, she acquaints the audience of them without affectation, as well as of her changing her religion. In the very first scenes the subject of the piece is fully explain'd. Zamor who was thought to be dead, is one of those unknown prisoners that had been set at liberty. He meets Alzira again the very moment that she comes from the altar where she had sworn to be true for ever to Guzman, who comes that instant and surprizes them both together. The great spirit of this American did not suffer him to conceal his name and family. Guzman, who was vex'd and jealous to the last degree, resolves he shall die ; but afterwards his father oppos'd his resolution, and by a certain accident, which has a charming effect on the minds of the audience, this same Zamor is discover'd to be that very American who had sav'd the life of Alvarez in battle. Guzman, notwithstanding his father's intreaty, orders Zamor to be committed to prison. Alzira trembling for her lover, bribes one of his keepers ; who undertakes to carry him safe out of the town ; but no sooner does Zamor find himself at liberty, than he takes the opportunity to sacrifice the cruel Guzman on the spot, tho' attended by his guards. He is thereupon seiz'd and sentenc'd to die, as is likewise Alzira, who was thought to have had a share in the murder of her spouse, tho' she was perfectly innocent. But just as these unhappy victims to love were expecting every minute to be put to death, Guzman, who was not yet dead of the wound he receiv'd

receiv'd from Zamor, makes amends for all his cruelties and barbarities, by shewing a generous clemency in the last breath of his life.

This, in few words, dear Isaac, is the subject of the piece ; and the following are the different characters of the actors.

Alvarez is a perfect honest man, full of candor and humanity, zealous for his religion, but without being blinded by that rage to which they give the name of piety.

Guzman is proud, vain, haughty, stately, cruel ; such a man, in short, as the Spaniards are represented to be who conquer'd Mexico ; and is so fully possess'd with the pernicious maxims of the makers of converts, that provided they are but made christians, 'tis all alike to him which way 'tis done.

Monteza is a new convert, convinc'd of the religion which he has embrac'd ; but his daughter on the contrary wedded to her old prejudices, owes her virtue to her own good sense only, so that few of her motives are founded on religion.

Zamor is zealous for his GODS, a faithful lover, form'd by the pure lessons of nature, humane to all men in general, irreconcilable to his enemies, full of valour, and fit for putting the boldest designs in execution.

These various characters are kept up perfectly well, and accompany'd with many glaring incidents, which strongly engage attention. Alvarez at the same time that he gives the first idea of his own character, thus informs the audience of the cruelties of the Spaniards,

Ah ! Dieu nous envoioit, par un contraire choix,
 Pour annoncer son nom, pour faire aimer ses loix
 Et nous, de ces climats destructeurs implacables ;
 Nous & d'or & de sang toujours insatiables ;
 Deserteurs de ses loix qu'il falloit enseigner,
 Nous égorgeons ce peuple, au lieu de le gagner.
 Par nous tout est en sang, par nous tout est en poudre ;
 Et nous n'avons du ciel imité que la foudre.

Notre

Notre nom, je l'avoue, inspire la terreur ;
 Les Espagnols sont craints ; mais, ils sont en horreur,
 Fleaux du nouveau monde, injustes, vains, avarés,
 Nous seuls en ce climat nous sommes les barbares.
 L'Americain, farouche en sa simplicité,
 Nous egale en courage, & nous passe en bonté.

Are we sent hither in our maker's cause,
 To spread his name, and recommend his laws ?
 We ! who destroy the country without mercy !
 Shall we with blood and gold, insatiate rage ?
 Shall we desert his laws we were to teach,
 And cut the people's throats to win their hearts ?
 Our priests are all for blood, for sword and fire,
 And only in its thunder act like heaven !
 Our name I own it, terror doth inspire,
 The Spaniards dreaded are, but more abhor'd.
 Proud, covetous, unjust ; we, we alone
 Are the Barbarians here, of this world the scourge.
 The wild American, tho' rough, yet honest,
 Surpasseth us in goodness, and hath not less courage.

I cannot be certain, dear Isaac, whether thou art sensible that all the different characters of this play are visible in these fourteen lines. That of Alvarez is display'd by the compassion which is conspicuous in his words, where he gives a perfect picture of the Spaniards and the Americans. 'Tis plain that this is a touch of a masterly hand. The following is another, not a whit inferior to it : Alzira speaking to her father, draws her own picture.

Mes yeux n'ont jusqu'ici rien vu que par vos yeux !
 Mon Cœur, changé par vous, abandonna ses dieux.
 Je ne regrette point leurs grandeurs terrassées,
 Devant ce dieu nouveau, comme nous, abaissées.
 Mais vous, qui m'assurés, dans mes troubles cruels,
 Que le paix habitoit aux pieds de ses autels ;
 Que sa loi, sa morale, & consolante, & pure,
 De mes sens desolez guériroit la blessure ;

Vous

Vous trompiés ma foiblesse ; un trait, toujours vain-
queur,

Dans le sein de ce dier vient déchirer mon cœur
Il y porte une image à jamais renaissante :
Zamore vit encor un cœur de son amante

Whate'er I see is with my father's eyes ;
Whate'er I love is for my father's sake ;
I chang'd my very Gods and took my father's.
Yet has this father, piously severe,
Wrong'd my believing weakness, and undone me.
He told me, to compose my troubled heart,
Peace held her dwelling at the altar's foot.
He told me, his religion cur'd despair,
Its law, its moral comforting and pure,
And soften'd every pang that pierc'd the soul,
But ah ! 'twas all deceit ! all dear delusion !
Mix'd with the image of an awful God,
A human image struggles in my heart,
And checks my willing virtue in its rising !
Zamor, tho' dead to nature, lives to love ;
Zamor still triumphs in Alzira's breast.

That trouble, and that struggle of the mind which Alzira so well expresses, perfectly denotes the disposition of a heart only chang'd by a paternal respect, and which has not such a firm belief in the new deity which it serves, as to merit its favours and rewards. How particular soever Alzira's character is, 'tis perfectly supported, and full of new sentiments created by the novelty of the subject. Such is this passage, where the author makes Alzira draw a parallel between the Spanish and American ladies.

Par ce grand changement dans ton ame inhumaine,
Par un effort si beau, tu vas changer la mienne.
Tu l'assures ma foi, mon respect, mon retour,
Tous mes vœux, s'il en est qui tiennent lieu d'amour.
Pardonne — Je m'égare — Epreuve mon courage.
Eut être une Espagnole eut promis d'avantage :
Elle eut pû prodiguer les charmes de ses pleurs.

Je

Je n'ai point leurs attraits, & je n'ai point leurs
mœurs.

Ce cœur simple, & formé des mains de la nature,
En voulant s'adoucir, redouble ton injure :
Mais, enfin, c'est à toi d'essayer désormais
Sur ce cœur indompté la force des bienfaits.

By such a change in thy inhuman breast,
By such a pleasing force thou changest mine.
Your right secures you my respect, - and faith,
And all my vows too, if they can charm like love.
Forgive me, I shall be betray'd by fear,
To promise till I overcharge my power.
Yet try what changes gratitude can make,
A Spanish dame perhaps wou'd promise more
Profuse in charms, and prodigal of tears,
Wou'd promise all things——and forget them all.
But I have weaker charms, and simpler arts ;
Guileless of soul, and left as nature form'd me.
I err, in honest innocence of aim,
And seeking to compose, inflame you more.
But to what lengths I may be tam'd——by benefits,
'Tis in your power to try, not mine to tell.

I own to thee, that I thought this a charming passage ; the uncultivated nature which is predominant in Alzira's petitions, and the contempt which she affects of the dissimulation and disguise of the European ladies, strike the mind, and attach it voluntarily to manners and customs, which however imperfectly known, affect by their singularity. I wou'd have a poet always apply himself to find out some subject which may furnish him with new ideas. Voltaire has hit upon the secret of making Alzira say a thousand bright things ; and while she is in a doubt concerning the truth of the religion which she has embrac'd, she explains in six verses what the learned have hardly been able to comprize in huge volumes.

Grand Dieu ! Condui Zamore au milieu des deserts
Ne serois tu le Dieu, que d'un autre univers ?

Les seuls Europeans sont-ils nez pour te plaire ?
 Es-tu tiran d'un monde, & de l'autre le pere ?
 Les vainqueurs, les vaincus tous les foibles humains
 Sont-ils egalement l'ouvrage de tes mains ?

Great God ! be Zamor's guide amidst his desarts.
 Would'st thou be God of the other world alone ?
 Are th'Europeans only born to please thee ?
 At thou one world's tyrant, and the other's father ?
 Victors, and vanquish'd, all the human race,
 Are not they equally thy handy-work ?

Methinks I hear some ridiculous bigot exclaiming
 against these moving passages, and treating the au-
 thor as a Manichee. Ignorant creature ! not to know
 that the only way for a writer to raise the beauty
 of one character, is to charge imperfections upon
 another, in order to shew the contrast ; and that Al-
 zira's doubts give a lustre to the establish'd faith of
 Monteza.

I conclude my extract of this piece, dear Isaac,
 with a passage worthy to be engrav'd in letters of
 gold ; a maxim which sovereigns should always have
 in their view ; which the inquisitors, persecutors, and
 other monsters of human nature ought to meditate
 profoundly, and which all mankind ought to follow.

Mais, renoncer aux Dieux, que l'on croit dans son
 cœur,

C'est le crime d'un lache, & non pas une erreur.
 C'est trahir à la fois sous un masque hypocrite,
 Et le Dieu qu'on prefere, & le Dieu que l'on quitte,
 C'est mentir au ciel meme, à l'univers, à soi.

Had I renounc'd my Gods, yet still believ'd 'em ;
 That had not been an error, but a crime,
 That had been mocking Heaven's whole host at
 once,

(The powers I quitted, and the power I chose.)
 A change like that had disciplin'd the tongue
 To lye to the whole world, to heaven, and con-
 science.

What misfortunes, what guilt might men have escaped, if they had been convinced of these principles! For want of this, how much blood that has been spilt, has been spilt unjustly!

Farewell, dear Isaac, and may the God of our fathers inlighten thy heart and thy understanding, load thee with blessings and wealth, and give thee a numerous family

L E T T E R LXV.

The city of Milan, large and well-built.—The Milanese pay great adoration to St Clou, or the Holy Nail.—The odd method made use of by the priests to drive the Devil out of those possessed, at the shrine of St. Clou. At the carnival season the nuns and monks act farces publicly in the convents. Description of the chief theatre. The method of applauding the performers. The nobility very covetous. Assassinations frequent, and protected. Many relics at Milan; the chief are those of Charles Borromeo, Moses's Rod, and the Serpent which Moses set up in the Desert.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Milan.—

TIS a fortnight ago that I left Naples, and am endeavouring to get as soon as I can to Switzerland; yet I shall stay a few days at Milan. Since I have been here, I have perceived a great many things that are worth a traveller's attention. The city is large, and well built; the French and Piedmontese, in whose power it is to be for some time longer, are not much lov'd by the inhabitants; and the jealous husbands especially, sigh for the happy moment when the Germans are to come and deliver them from those troublesome gallants.

Since the French became masters of Milan, wine has very much fallen in its price, and the number of christnings is considerably augmented. A great many husbands who never had children, and thought

their wives barren, now enjoy the tender appellation of father; which happy multiplication the zealots ascribe to the intercessions of Charles Borromeo. The astrologers say, tis owing to the happy influences of the stars *; but the jealous husbands think that the French have much more share in it, than either the saints or the celestial globes. They are therefore impatient for the return of the Germans, and I doubt not but they will cause public thanksgivings to be observed upon their arrival, to those saints in whom they place the greatest trust.

The Milanese, as well as the other Italians have very great protectors or patrons with the Deity, to whom they have built magnificent temples. The principal advocates whom they have chosen in the celestial court, formerly lived in their city. Of these Clou † (which signifies a nail) and Charles Borromeo are the most distinguished. On the festival of Clou, his shrine is laid upon the high altar of the dome, and the people come from all parts to prostrate themselves before it. A multitude of folks that are possess'd with the Devil, come and put themselves into the most astonishing postures before the saint, torment themselves, cry, howl, and, in short, act the same part at Milan, as the convulsionaries do at Paris. Their diseases are cured after a very pleasant manner. A priest throws some flowers at them, which he plucks out of those that adorn the saint's shrine; and the devils, sensible of the smell of the pinks and violets, become good-natur'd, peaceable, complaisant, enter into conversation with the priests, and talk to them very courteously. There is nothing so engaging to the curiosity of a philosopher, as to be a spec-

* The Almanac de Milan, a famous one.

† This requires some explanation: Jacob Brito hearing some talk at Milan about the Holy Nail, thought it was really a saint, which had formerly existed in flesh and bones; but this saint is only a great piece of iron, deify'd by avarice, on pretence that it was one of those which had been drove into the real cross. There's half a hundred of those nails in Europe; and every church that has one, does not scruple to cry down the rest, in order to prove its own to be genuine.

tator of those scenes. The enthusiasms of the priests of Delphi were nothing to it. Among those people so possess'd, who perform the same ceremony every year, there are some persons to whom they teach several words of different languages; the priests make a great handle of this artifice, for the common people are very much surprized to hear a peasant talk in a language which he never learn'd.

Some time ago, a Nazarene doctor, who was interrogating one of those people possess'd by the devil, forgot the questions which he was to ask him, and propos'd some to him that related to one of his brethren; who understanding the watch-word, thought he address'd himself to him, and answer'd for his comrade. This adventure somewhat astonish'd the doctor; but he quickly recovered from his surprize, which was only observ'd by those who knew the ridicule and fraud of those infernal comedies.

The Milanese are altogether as superstitious as their neighbours; but they accommodate their devotions to their pleasures, and as the saints days procure them a great deal of diversion, they take as much of it as they can, especially the fair sex, the friars, the gallants, the musicians, and the sellers of lemonade.

The carnival at Milan is almost as gay as it is at Venice; that is a season when all people abandon themselves to pleasure, and even the nuns in the convents take their share of it; for they act comedies one among another, dress themselves like harlequins and scaramouches in linsy-woolsey, and at that time sister Dorothy and sister Angelica become buffoons and jackpuddings. From Christmas to Lent, people crowd to the convents to look through the grates, and see those companies of female comedians, who acquire themselves wonderfully, and often play their parts better than real comedians.

The monks are in nothing inferior to the nuns as to masquerading, and they also act farces publicly in their convents; the father prior acts the cuckold on a turn-spit; the young noviciates act the parts of An-
gelica

gelica and Spineta to a prodigy; and every soul, even to the lay-brothers, is for sharing in the public diversions. These monks even extend the art farther; they go to private houses to act their parts, and for a treat you may have a band of Franciscans or Augustinians at your house a whole afternoon; nay, you may pick and chuse among all the different orders of monks.

Notwithstanding these private companies of performers, there are several others of true comedians dispers'd up and down the city. The chief theatre, which is taken up by the opera, is magnificent, and the decorations pompous. The Milanese have a particular way of applauding their actors and actresses; they compose sonnets, or else get some hackney-poets to write them; and when a virtuoso or a virtuosa has sung perfectly well, they scatter those printed sonnets all about the theatre. These songs are all of 'em in praise of some actor; and it often happens that in their poetry, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, and Mahomet II. are but striplings compar'd to signors Scalfi, Farenili, Sinesini, and other halves of men, who have paid very dear for the advantage of a clear voice. The English have another manner of applauding; which is much more pleasing to the actors: Instead of verses, they scatter purses full of money; and the gentlemen virtuosos are not so fond of glory, as to prefer sonnets to pistoles. They are not to be content however with the former in Italy, where they can't do better; for there's no Milanese that has a temptation to applaud after the English manner.

There are few nobility so covetous as those of this country; they have learnt the way to be saving, and to divert themselves at a small expence; they get the charges of all the public diversions defray'd by a society of citizens and merchants who are call'd Faquini, because they open the carnival by a masqueade, in which they are dress'd like peasants. The nobles lend their palaces for the entertainments given by the Faquini, but they don't contribute a shilling to

the expence of them; and some of 'em would be glad to let their houses out to pay the rent, if they thought the thing wou'd not be known.

There is no place next to Naples, where assassinations are committed so safe and cheap as at Milan. 'Tis true the Germans and French are very much against such sort of bargains; nevertheless there are numbers of people easy enough to be found, who for a pistole will deliver you from an enemy. When 'tis attended with any difficulty or delay, in order to cut all ceremony short, they wait near some church for the person they intend to murder; and after they have done the job, they go very coolly into the church, and make it their sanctuary.

I have made enquiry, dear Monceca, into the origin of that immunity which has been granted to the temples of several different religions, and after serious consideration of the motives that occasioned this custom, I don't find any other than the ambition of the priests: Those among the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Israelites our forefathers, who had the care of the divine worship, were every whit as ambitious as those among the moderns: They thought to gain the respect of private men, by giving them a sanctuary in any disasters that might happen to them, but never distinguished between the crime and the misfortune, so that the assassin found as much security in the temple, as the man that shed blood involuntarily. The Nazarene monks retained this custom in countries where they had the entire rule. They also granted the same privileges to their churches and monasteries, as were indulg'd to the palaces of sovereigns and their ambassadors. But the rights which they arrogated to themselves were so abused by them, that they became noxious to civil society; there was no crime ever so great, but found a sanctuary among them; whereas princes, who have a power to grant immunities, only protect those persons, whose faults are pardonable, and not inconsistent with the character of the man of honour. An ambassador would certainly not have given any shelter to Cartouche;

on the contrary, there's not one but would have caused him to be arrested. But that infamous robber, in spite of his crimes, wou'd have met with entire safety in Italy in one of the most paultry chapels. Alas! dear Monceca, is it the pleasure of the Deity that his altars should give a sanction to wickedness? Is it not absurd to build temples to the Almighty, only to furnish retirement and shelter for villains? How cruel is that superstition, which under the veil of piety gives such authority to guilt? Happy are those Nazarene nations which have not given into this error, and which punish transgressions even in the sanctuary.

Milan is furnished with as good, and as powerful relics as any town in Italy; those of Charles Borromeo, which are the most considerable, are kept in a coffin made of several pieces of rock crystal, join'd together by plates of silver gilt. The body of this Nazarene is still to be seen entire thro' the crystal; indeed, notwithstanding the extraordinary care that was taken in embalming it, part of his nose has by length of time received some damage. A monk of whom I ask'd the reason, assured me, that God had permitted this, because the saint in his life-time had been too fond of sweet odours, and that the loss of one half of his nose was the punishment of his sensuality. If the Deity was thus to stigmatise the failings of all the Nazarene saints, I really believe there are few of the canonised friars that wou'd have a tongue left in their mouths, for they have been generally prodigious gormandisers, and great lyars.

If the Jews, dear Monceca, had a taste for relics, we might find some at Milan that would suit our synagogues perfectly well. Moses's rod is kept in the cathedral of this city: 'Tis true, that it is not proved to demonstration to be the same rod which was made use of by that prophet, for they shew another at Rome in the church of St. John de Lateran; therefore, the surest way not to be mistaken would be to buy both, or else charitably to suppose, what is very possible, that the legislator had two rods. In the
collecting

collecting of reliques of such antiquity, one must not stand upon trifles, nor be too critical, but take the whole in the lump as the Nazarenes do. If we were minutely to examine every thing that is said touching Moses's rod, we should be at least as much confounded as they are. The rabbi Abarbanel has wrote a long dissertation upon this rod, in which he tells a great many extravagant things, and affirms magnifierially, that Moses carried it to the mountain where he died, and that it was laid in that prophet's tomb. I could wish that the rabbi Arbabanel would do me the favour to tell me, who reveal'd this fact to him; till then we may safely make shift with the two rods which the Nazarenes have; and if a third appears, it is but buying that too.

There is also a relique of much more note in another church*; tis the serpent which Moses set up in the desert. As to this relique, there are not two of the sort as there are of the rod; but let the Nazarenes say what they will of it, I question whether it was cotemporary with that prophet. I should rather take it for a memorial of some extraordinary event, as the goose of the capitol. Therefore I would not advise our synagogues to offer to trouble themselves with this piece of antiquity, which I think to be Roman, rather than Egyptian. This famous serpent, which is of brass, is placed upon a column of marble. How stark blind are some men! let's pity them, dear Monceca, rather than despise them. Folly is the very appendix of human nature. Happy are they to whom heaven has granted a little more understanding than to some of their fellow-creatures,

Fare thee well, dear Monceca; as soon as I get into Switzerland I shall write to thee. Live content and happy.

* In the vestry of the church of St. Ambrose.

L E T T E R

LETTER LXVI.

A comparison between the antient and modern orators.— The former adjudg'd to be most excellent; supposed to be owing to the nature and sublimity of their subjects.— Able counsellors and orators much better rewarded in England than in France.— Patru, an excellent advocate in France liv'd and died very poor; while Chapellain a sorry writer was pensioned by the king.— Boileau's generosity to Patru.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris——

SINCE I heard from thee last, I doubt not but thou art arriv'd in Egypt; and I write to thee with a firm confidence that there my letter will find thee. Our friend Jacob Brito, who is on the point of leaving Italy, and going to Switzerland, has made very good remarks in his travels, which he has been so kind as to communicate to me. I hope thou wilt not have less complaisance, and that thou wilt communicate to us both every thing that thou findest remarkable or considerable in Egypt.

I shall endeavour to get as much improvement as possible by my stay at Paris. I was yesterday at the public court of the parliament, and heard two of the most celebrated advocates of the kingdom plead: I was very much pleased with their speeches, which were really beautiful; the stile was clear and accurate, and so eloquent, that all the audience applauded those two able advocates. Yet to compare French oratory with that of Cicero and Demosthenes, their merit appears to be much inferiour to that of the antients; for they have neither their majesty, nor the sublimity of their genius, nor their fire of imagination. Being fully convinc'd, after inquiry into the cause of this difference, that it cou'd not be this, namely, that Cicero and Demosthenes were men not to be match'd, because nature had not forgot how she

the form'd their brains, I discover'd, that the advantages of the antient orators were owing to their situation, and to the subjects of which they treated.

There are some subjects which spontaneously furnish the mind with ideas that are grand, sublime, and magnificent, and which don't need the disposition of phrases, and the harmony of words to elevate the mind, since the plainest terms are sufficient to express them. In speaking of the Divinity, for instance, all the ideas which the understanding receives of him, engage it, seize it, and in a manner transport it beyond its sphere. Then the most common diction, provided it be plain and distinct, and clearly conveys the ideas, is sufficient to give energy to the discourse, and the plainest eloquence becomes sublime. Of the truth of this, we have a decisive instance in the book of Genesis, where God says, "Let there be light; and there was light." Gen. cap. v. ver. 3. In this expression, which even the pagans own to be sublime, the obedience of the thing created seems to conform to the will of the creator in the same moment. What ideas are there not convey'd to the mind in such simple terms? "The power of God, the creation of light, clearness form'd by a single word, and granted to the universe by the goodness of an immense and omnipotent being." The choice of words, and an affected turn of the phrase, wou'd have diminish'd the sublime simplicity of this passage.

If it be confess'd that the subject is of infinite service to the orator, and can in some measure render him eloquent without the help of art, it will be easy to discover the true reason of the superiority of the antients over the moderns.

An advocate of the parliament of Paris has a notable cause to defend, when he pleads for the fortune or estate of a private man. If it be an affair wherein any person of distinction is concern'd, 'tis the subject of a celebrated plea. But whatsoever suit an advocate may defend at Paris, there is not one cause, the merits of which stripp'd of its ornaments, can inspire the

the audience with a certain greatness of mind, seize their attention at once, and raise it to notions which are in a manner unknown to them. What mind can help being affected, when an orator says that he pleads for the fortune of a king? The beginning of Cicero's oration for king Dejotarus, and the whole exordium of the said plea, which is a master-piece of eloquence, is not so much oblig'd for its beauty to the assistance of art, as to the dignity of the subject. Let an advocate prepossess his audience in the sublimest terms, "let him plead for a Frenchman oppress'd with the stripes of fortune, a victim to the capriciousness of destiny; were he to set him off as a man endow'd with virtues that put his persecutors to the blush; and were he to interest the Gods themselves as well as a man in the arret which is to decide the fate of his client," he may by the choice of harmonious terms, and by the beautiful cadence of his phrases, strike the ear agreeably, but he will never engage the mind, and never raise it to so high a degree, as that orator will, who only says, "I plead for the fortune of a king," &c. There's a natural sublimity in these words; they offer above twenty ideas to the understanding; they are expressive of the grandeur of the subject treated of; they represent to the mind a king, who is the judge of others, oblig'd to defend himself, and in short they engage it in favour of the person attack'd, on account of the dignity and majesty of his rank.

As lofty as is the beginning of the oration for Dejotarus, it perhaps cost Cicero less pains than the preamble of his oration for Archias. But in the first he pleaded for a king, and in the second for a poet. The beginning of the first Catiline oration is judg'd by all mankind to be a piece of perfect eloquence; grant it is, but what was the subject of it? What was the reason of that celebrated apostrophe of the orator? No less than a republic which was mistress of the world, in danger of immediate destruction from a rebel.

The dignity of the subjects treated of frequently deter-

determines the degree of the orators eloquence, and no wonder therefore when we see in Demosthenes and Cicero such passages as strike and engage us more strongly than those we meet with in the moderns. They were neither more learned, nor more witty than the latter, but they went upon subjects which furnish'd both wit and learning, and led naturally to the sublime. It wou'd be easy to shew that in the ordinary causes pleaded by Cicero, he is not superior to Patru and Errard; and if both the latter had liv'd at Rome, they wou'd not have been inferior to him in any thing.

The advocates general of the parliaments have it more in their power, than meer advocates, to enjoy the advantages of the Greek and Roman orators; for they are sometimes employ'd in causes of weight and importance to the good of the state and in the discourses which they make in their remonstrances, they are capable of speaking with a certain dignity, which comes up pretty near to the Roman grandeur. But their genius is impoverish'd and weaken'd by a number of trifling niceties, and an insignificant detail of formalities. 'Tis with the French magistrates as with the scholastic philosophers; and take away their common beaten maxims, they know not where to fix themselves. Were it not for Aristotle, a regent of philosophy is apt to think that the light of nature only serves to mislead us, and the generality of the gownmen wou'd not presume to hold an opinion which they don't find in Cujas, Moulin, and Argentre.

Among the antients, the freedom of thinking was one of the principal causes of eloquence. The Greeks and the Romans were not so fond of leaning upon the authority of other men, as of building upon reasons that seem'd to convince their own private judgment. There are not so many quotations in all the pleadings of Cicero and Demosthenes, as in the first page of those of le Maitre. Of what importance is it that such an opinion was maintain'd by such a doctor, such a father of the church, or such a lawyer?

it be contrary to reason, and the public benefit, it ought to be no more valued than that of an ignoramus.

'Tis a folly to go about to justify the failings of some men; but what is good in them, there's an absolute necessity of commending them; but to deify their defects is ridiculous idolatry. What, because forsooth du Moulin and d'Argentre are not agreed in certain questions, must I not dare to determine in a point which to me appears clear and evident? Must I spend whole years rather before I come to a determination? An enquiry so insignificant, blunts the penetrating faculty of the mind, and exhausts its vivacity and force,

The English take a surer way to attain to the sciences; they only grant their consent to truth. The authority of all the authors both antient and modern, could not force them not to make use of their reason. They judge of things by the ideas which they have of themselves, and not by the notions of other people. The liberty which the English nation enjoys, might also be a very great assistance to such as apply themselves to eloquence. A speaker at the head of the commons, who talks for the welfare and safety of his country, who informs the sovereign of the necessities of his subjects, who renews the assurances of that mutual alliance, and reciprocal conduct between the prince and the people, treats of matters which are of equal importance to the subjects of the Greek and Roman orators. It wou'd not therefore be an extraordinary thing to find eloquence carry'd to a farther degree in England than it is in France. Ambition itself may be of very great service towards it. An able advocate at Paris gains five or six hundred thousand livres at most in his whole life-time; but be he ever so eloquent, he has only a daily salary for his learning and his talents, and that's all the rewards he must expect. In England many honours are annex'd to persons of a distinguish'd genius. An able orator may be chose for the advocate of his country; and his eloquence promotes him to a rank in life, which nothing but pure merit can lead the

way to. If the offices of president au Mautier in France were bestow'd upon those advocates that distinguish'd themselves most, I doubt not but the bar wou'd make a more illustrious figure than it does now. The ambition of attaining to the chief office of the magistracy wou'd be a greater incitement to the study of eloquence, and the advocate when he came once to know that he was born and cut out for great employments, wou'd entertain greater and more noble ideas.

The orators are to blame, as well as others of the learned, in setting money up for their mark, rather than glory. I have been acquainted with a great many authors in my time; and when I have talk'd to them of some of their works which I have thought were not so accurate as they should be, they said, "what wou'd you have us to do? The bookseller give us but half a pistole a sheet, what can we perform that is good at that price? 'Tis the same, I find, with the advocates, I have but ten pistoles fee for a pleading, says one, shall I sweat and toil in a cause for such a poor sum as that? I plead as I am paid, and the merchandize I give, is worth the money I receive.

'Tis impossible therefore that an orator in France can apply himself to perfect his art, and to get an estate at the same time. It must be his option either to resolve to be poor, or not to produce any but imperfect pieces. 'Tis impossible that the great number of causes which many of the advocates undertake shou'd be defended as they ought; for one advocate often pleads more causes in a year, than Cicero and Demosthenes did in the whole course of their lives.

Eloquence has been carry'd much farther in the pulpit, than at the bar. The composers of sermons, panegyrics, and funeral orations, were either in eminent posts, or else expected that they shou'd be advanced to such by means of their talents: Their aim was to please, and not to amass wealth; and to perfect their talents was their only study. They had another advantage also over the orators of the bar.

All their subjects furnish'd them with a vast fund of matter, which was sublime, and enough to elevate the mind by being barely contemplated. Is any thing more grand and majestic than the explanation of the orders and decrees of the Deity? Any thing that touches, strikes, or more engages men than the principal rules of morality, and the fundamental points of their religion? Bourdaloue, Bossuet, Flechier, &c. were much more perfect in their kind than Patru, Maitre, and Errard, yet they were not more eloquent than the latter; but their subjects were more grand and extensive, and they cou'd afford as much time to polish their works, as was necessary to perfect them. The case is not the same with the advocates: Patru who was for preferring glory to riches, and was content with a reputation, went thro' a certain number of pleadings with very great care, both liv'd and died a poor man, He was assisted by a poet, whose generosities repair'd the injuries done him by the caprices of fortune *.

What a scandal is it to the French that such a man as Patru was almost ready to be starv'd, while Chapelain, and a parcel of sorry authors were allow'd considerable pensions? This dear Isaac, is an affecting instance of those prejudices, and that ill taste which prevail sometimes in the most polite and the best ages. That of Lewis the XIV. was fertile in such, and he was a monarch that rewarded them like a generous magnificent prince; but he almost forgot the names of the greatest men in this kingdom, while he bestow'd his favours on the worst of all poets †

Farewell dear Isaac, live content and happy, let me hear from thee often.

M. Patru wanting money, had a mind to sell his library; but Chapelain hearing the resolution of this poor scholar, bought the library, but would never take the books till Patru was

Chapellain, had very considerable pensions allow'd him to the dying Day.

LETTER LXVII.

Character of the Parisian nuns.—The story of one of them related by herself.—Reflections thereon.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris.—

THE manners of the Parisian nuns, dear Brito, are much regular than those of the Venetians; not that they think their condition more agreeable than the others, but the check and restraint which they live under at Paris, make them virtuous in spite of themselves, and support that discretion of theirs, which cou'd not resist the temptations that are too strong for the Venetian ladies. The nunneries in this city are prisons full of innocent victims, devoted to avarice or ambition. The French, who have good nature and compassion for the unfortunate, depart from that character in nothing but the cruel use which they make of those convents.

Half of the fathers at Paris are as barbarous to their daughters as certain people of Peru, who keep the women they take in war for their concubines, maintain the children they have by them as delicately as possible, till they are thirteen years of age, and then eat them *. The practice of the French is much the same; when they have three or four daughters, they get a husband for the eldest, or for the favourite, and strictly confine all the rest, whom they decree from their birth to suffer a thousand torments. "I don't think," says Montaigne, "that 'tis so cruel to eat a man after he is dead, as when he is alive." I am of his opinion, dear Brito, and to tell thee my real sentiment, I would sooner forgive a father for killing his infant the moment it was born, than a nurse it to such an age, to prepare it for the suffering of horrid torments as long as it liv'd; for that is real

* The History of the Incas, lib. i. cap 12.

the case of most of the nuns : And of this I can assure thee from my own knowledge, having been many times in convents with the chevalier de Maisin, who made me acquainted with two or three kinswomen of his, that are doom'd to pass all their days in torments.

I said once to a cetrain nun, " You are not so unhappy as you imagine ; while you are sequestred from the world and its perplexities, your life slides on serenely ; nothing ought to trouble you ; you are not disturb'd by any family cares. In short, you have the very three things in which the chiefeft happiness consists, viz. Virtue, Health, and Competency. " You are mistaken, said she, I have neither of these three ingredients. As for my virtue it is a virtue per force, and not what I have acquir'd by choice and pre-engagement ; 'tis therefore rather a constraint which hinders me from submitting to the temptation, without depriving me of the inclination, than a real hatred that I have to sin. The grates are a guard to my chastity and modesty ; yet I don't find my heart the less tender. Of what avail is therefore a virtue, which can be of no service towards calming the mind ? a virtue, which is such no longer, than while it has not the liberty of becoming vice ?

" My health has been destroy'd for a long time : What with melancholy, the regret for being confin'd without deserving it, and what with the despair of being restor'd to liberty, my blood is corrupted ; I have generally such a sinking of spirits, that I am ready to die, besides frequent terrible fits of the head-ache ; and before I have seen much of the winter, my physicians tell me, that I shan't live till the spring ; yet I have often baffled their predictions, tho' by what accident, I know not.

" 'Tis true I have what is necessary, but what does it avail to happiness, for the body to be nourished, and the mind only fed with gall and wormwood ? Moreover, how many plagues and mortifications do I suffer for this competency ? Being forc'd day and night to obey the call of a bell. I scarce have closed my eye-lids, but I must rise, tho' it be as dark as pitch,

pitch, to hasten to mattins, where for an hour I mumble some Latin prayers of which I hardly understand one word; and in three or four hours after I have got to bed again, I must return to the offices. My whole life, in short, is spent in reciting my breviary, and in hearing the dull speeches of my lady abbess, a fantastical, moody, odd, peevish and superstitious creature, like all old women, who offers to God the torments which she makes me suffer*.

“ Consider now, Sir, continued this nun, if my condition is so serene as you imagine, and whether I enjoy the three main ingredients of sovereign happiness? I own, said I, that I am deceiv’d in the notion I had of it; but for God’s sake, pray tell me, how you could find in your heart to make vows that wou’d render you so unhappy? I will now, said she, give you the history of the vocation of three fourths of the nuns to the monastic state; for they are call’d to it in the same manner as I was.

“ As soon as I came to be fix or seven years of age, my mother, who was absolutely determin’d that I shou’d go into a convent, whipp’d me regularly twice a-day; the least fault that I committed was punish’d with the utmost severity, and with this rigour was I treated till I was nine years old. At length I was told that I was to go into a convent to be a boarder there with one of my aunts who was a nun, and had been inform’d of the state of life for which I was design’d. The two first months that I pass’d in the monastery, I thought my self in paradise. My aunt, instead of slaps o’ the face, gave me sugar-plums; there was now no more chastisement, no more reprimands; I was treated with extraordinary tenderness, and bless’d the happy moment that I enter’d the convent. My mother sometimes took me out with her to dine at her house; but those very days were days of sorrow and affliction, for I always return’d in tears to my aunt, who comforted me for the cuffs and child-

* *Offre a Dieu les tourmens qu’elle me fait souffrir.* Boileau
Sat. x.

ings which my mother gave me in abundance. In fine, she told me, when I was sixteen years of age, that I must now take my choice, that is to say, return to my mother, or commence a nun. You will easily judge that I did not hesitate which to do, and I said I wou'd take the veil. My mother before she consented to my option, observ'd great ceremony ; she refused at first to grant me my request, and I was actually oblig'd to intreat her, for the very thing that she long'd most of all to grant me. At last, after many petitions she said she was willing that I shou'd be a nun ; but that I might never repent my vocation, she added, that she wish'd first to shew me the world a little, that I might not determine myself without knowing why or wherefore. She forc'd me to go for a fortnight to her house ; and really that fortnight fully confirm'd me in my purpose. She made me rise every morning at six a clock : A cursed jade of a milliner, on pretence of setting me off suitable to a miss of my quality pull'd my locks for three or four hours together : A pair of stays was made for me in which I had scarce liberty to breathe. There's a necessity, said my mother, for dressing with care, to go abroad. She carry'd me to pass the day in some assemblies of old gossips, where I sat with a demure countenance for five or six hours together.

“ At last came the happy day, when 'twas in my power to chuse either the world or a convent. I quitted my stays and all my finery, bid adieu for ever to that devilish milliner, and came back to my aunt. How happy, said I to her, is it to be free from that constraint of which so many women are idolizers ! What ? is this a world that people shou'd ever be sorry to be separated from ! They that are so, must either be very silly, or know but little of it.

“ Having these ideas, I made vows that nothing shou'd ever divorce me from this house. I spent my first years in tranquility, but when I came to be nineteen or twenty years of age, I began to find that I had been deluded. The people of the world, whom I saw in the parlour, scatter'd the mist from my eyes ;

my heart felt certain motions of which it was not master ; the singing of the birds, the sight of men, and of myself too, when I turn'd to my looking-glass ; and above all, my own heart told me that I was not made to be insensible : But alas ! to what purpose shou'd I have been sensible ! My desires wou'd only have been an aggravation of my misfortune. I endeavour'd at first to dispel my uneasiness by reading ; but the more discoveries I made, - the more was my mind disturb'd. The books that pleas'd me most, were romances ; of which I was fond to the last degree, so that I bedew'd the most tender passages with my tears. A lady of my acquaintance was so complaisant as to lend me the books, and I soon exhausted her library. My vexation for having quitted the world, and for being the melancholy victim of the ambition and avarice of my family, has made my life a burthen to me. I expected nothing to set me at liberty but death, which I wish for, much rather than fear. My mother at the same time is as unhappy as myself ; she had made a sacrifice of me for the better settlement of my eldest sister in marriage, who died a few days after the ceremony ; so that my family has no child left but me, and the estate goes to a remote collateral branch which she hates, and has reason to complain of. It seems as if heaven had taken care to revenge my cause."

I know not, dear Brito, what thou think'st of this barbarous practice of the Nazarene papists, in confining their daughters. But, in my opinion, he must have the heart of a Cannibal who invented a custom, which, under a pretence of devoting souls to God, renders a number of innocent people for ever unhappy. I have often talk'd with the Nazarenes concerning this usage, so contrary to reason and the law of nature. They endeavour to justify it by reasons of state ; " If," say they, " all the daughters were to be married, families could not support themselves in a certain rank, and they would be oblig'd to make unsuitable matches." Wretched argument ! which has no other foundation than the stupid vanity of some

nobles

nobles infatuated with their condition ; a vanity as prejudicial as the plague to the good of society. How do the English, the Swedes, the Prussians, the Danes, and other nations do ? Are they less attentive to preserve the privileges of their nobility, than the French or the Spaniards ? No, surely ; but they take more care not to suffer themselves to be blinded by old prejudices. If there was no nun in France, a nobleman indeed would not marry a girl with a hundred thousand crowns fortune ; nor, on the other hand, would he be oblig'd to give such a fortune to his sister. If we look into families in general, and consider the estates that come into, or go out of such families, during the course of a century, we shall find it much the same. Besides, of what service is it to the state and the republic, that certain private men accumulate immense wealth ? This is rather contrary to the interest of the public ; for 'tis the better for a kingdom, where its wealth is divided into just proportions.

Let us leave the Nazarenes, dear Brito, in their own blindness : Is it our business, whom they so cruelly persecute, to endeavour to open their eyes ? But why shou'd we wonder at it, when they thus persecute even their own children ? Thou can'st not imagine how many convents of nuns there are in France ; every town is full of 'em, and I fancy they are as numerous as those of the monks.

Take care of thyself, dear Brito ; live content and happy ; and may heaven grant thee a large family, of which thou wilt make a better use than the Nazarenes do.

L E T T E R LXVIII.

A Description of the city of Geneva.—Reflections on their policy, government, and commerce.—The religion and manners of the inhabitants.—The Italians hate the Genevese.—A story of a Piedmontese preacher; and the absurdity of his doctrine.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Geneva. —

TIS now six days that I have been at Geneva, where my stay has been longer than I intended. The city was formerly very ill built, but for some years² past has been embellish'd with a great number of new houses, the architecture of which is of a very good taste. The fortifications of Geneva are good and regular; men are perpetually at work upon them; and the citizens contribute with pleasure to the necessary expences of finishing them, having renew'd the imposts that were laid for supporting the expences for ten years^{*}. The Genevese might spare themselves the charge of these fortifications, which cost them an infinite sum of money; for their alliance with France, and the protestant cantons are their security against the insults and invasions of the Savoyards, their common enemy, from whose dominion they formerly revolted.

There are two reasons that oblige France and the Switzers to protect this republic; 'tis not the interest of the French to suffer the Savoyards and the Piedmontese to gain ground on this side of the Alps; nor is it the interest of the protestant cantons to suffer a city to be destroy'd or subdued, which may be look'd upon as the metropolis of the Calvinist religion.

Therefore, as both religion and state-policy conspire to the defence of the Genevese, I can't imagine what is their motive for rendering their city as strong

* This letter was wrote before the late troubles in Geneva.

as the best places in Europe. I am apt to think that, according to the rules of true policy, their conduct is to be condemn'd. France had never been tempted to break her alliance with Geneva, if the latter had still remain'd in its former condition. Who can tell whether hereafter she will not alter her mind? To expose a fine lady to the view of a gentleman, whose heart is very apt to be inflam'd, and who may hit upon the secret of making himself happy, is running a very great risque. A day may come, perhaps, when the Genevese will repent their having deck'd and trimm'd their city like a new bride: Some king of France may happen to fall in love with her, and to marry her contrary to the rules. I know that the protestant cantons would oppose the match, but perhaps it wou'd be out of their power to hinder its taking effect; and when such a thing is once done, 'twou'd be as difficult to wrest Geneva out of the hands of a French monarch, as it was heretofore for Menelaus to rescue his dear Helen from the clutches of the Trojans. I have sometimes talk'd jestingly with several of the citizens about this pretended union. They told me, they had nothing to fear in that respect, and that were their city in its utmost state of perfection, it wou'd not make France amends for the loss of the alliance of the protestant cantons, and for the charges she wou'd be oblig'd to be at to make herself mistress of it.

The principal commerce of Geneva, consists in silks, books, and several other sorts of merchandize, of which they send great quantities into all foreign countries; but 'tis remarkable that they print few books in this city that treat of matters relating to protestantism; for it would be a hard matter to vend them, because the booksellers of England and Holland have it in their power to furnish all the Nazarene protestants, and especially the French refugees, with such books to better advantage. At Geneva therefore they print the works of all the Spanish and Italian doctors; Sanches, Escobar, Suares, Molina, Bellarmin, Cajetano, &c. are oblig'd to the protestants for perpetuating their works, which the Genevese
print

print just as they are, infomuch that, notwithstanding the difference of religion, they never alter a single word, even in the books which are the most opposite to theirs.

But the Nazarene papists are seldom so sincere, for they augment or diminish all writings that pass through their hands just as pleases them. In the infancy of printing, they added a passage of twenty lines in the history of Josephus, but were afterwards oblig'd to own the uncertainty of that passage, which is not to be met with in the generality of their MSS. The Molinists in the last century publish'd several editions of Jansenius, in which were the famous propositions that were condemn'd; but in the former editions a man must have the talent of making white black to find them there.

The Genevese, in the general, are fat and lusty; they are reckon'd ill-natur'd and stingy, but 'tis a character which they don't deserve, for they are polite and affable, and much more so than all their neighbours. 'Tis true that they have a suspicion of foreigners of the Romish religion; but they are to be pardon'd for mistrusting their most mortal enemies who have more than once endeavour'd to lay snares for them. They are very frugal and temperate, and affect to appear particularly grave; which is a passion that often makes them run into a ridiculous excess.

One failing, which is common to all the inhabitants of Geneva, is the too violent hatred they bear to the popish religion. They fondly indulge themselves in such notions as seem to be the most contrary to reason, and when it happens to be the subject of conversation they talk like enthusiasts. I don't blame them for rejecting a faith which they think defective and erroneous; but I cou'd wish they wou'd act more philosophically, and refute error, without hating the person that is so unhappy as to be tainted with it.

I think that all mankind may be consider'd as forming in some sort but one single plain religion, because they all adore the same Deity, and differ only in point of worship and ceremonies. Happy are they who have rules and precepts to lead them the near

way to felicity; but because they know more than others, and have more ways to obtain their salvation, they ought rather to pity than despise, such as have more pains to take than themselves to get into the celestial path.

I own to thee, dear Monceca, that I can't but compare Heaven to a stately palace, with four gates that look to the four different parts of the world; one may enter this fine structure from the east, west, north, and south, but the roads leading to it are not equally good. We Jews walk in the eastern road, which the Divinity has made smooth for us. The Nazarenes come to it by the western road, which is rugged and bad. The Turks pass by the north road, which is still worse; and all the religions which are in the Indies and America, walk in the south road, which is full of sloughs, and surrounded with precipices. In this road, great numbers of people lose their way, but yet there are some that arrive at the celestial palace, notwithstanding the difficulties of so dangerous a road.

The Nazarene papists, and our rabbies, condemn this opinion; they think that God ought to have no compassion on a creature that endeavours to serve him in another religion. And there is a certain friar at Rome, that wou'd rather chuse to deny the being of a God, than allow a place in Heaven to some Nazarene protestants, who have lived examples of the most accomplish'd virtue in this world.

When an Italian wants to obtain any thing of his family, he threatens to retire to Geneva, me n'andevra in Genevra. And when a father hears his son say so, he is as much affected by it as if he said, I will go to all the devils. The Italians might easily distrust themselves, if they wou'd, of the ill opinion which they entertain of the Genevese. Were they but to make ever so little enquiry into the behaviour of the people, they would find that the conversation of few of them is so pure and rational as theirs is, whom they take to be devils spew'd out of hell. There is no medium in the decision of the Italians;

whosoever is not entirely of their faith, they give headlong to Belzebub.

I will now entertain thee with a story of a Piedmontese preacher, which thou wilt think perhaps is a fiction, but I assure thee that I was a witness of the fact. He preach'd upon hell-torments; and after having enumerated all the cauldrons, forks, and firebrands in that infernal mansion, he said,

“My brethren, perhaps you will be curious to know the manner how Satan makes the damned wretches pass in review before him, when he has a desire to know the number of them. This devil first causes the drum to be beat by Mahomet, who is his chief drummer: The Jews file off first with their rabbies at their head, and as they pass along, the devils run the prongs of great iron forks into their fundaments. Then come the Turks, who receive the like punishment. After them the Heretics pass, dragging heavy chains. The devils pour melted lead into their mouths, to punish them for the blasphemies they uttered in their life-time against the saints, and particularly against St. Julian, the patron of this church, whom you see seated in his niche there, and whom you don't take so much care of as you ought. I found but six livres and ten sous last week in his trunk; and if this be the case always, you are in a very fair way my dear brethren to make melted lead scarce in hell. Do you think that St. Julian, your patron, will pardon you for neglecting him so much? If you do, you will find yourselves very much mistaken. As for my own part, I furnish him with all the oil that I am able, and he is always well lighted. But the festival of the place is just at hand; who is to cloath him? Am I to do it? No truly, 'tis out of my power to do it, and I can assure you, that if you don't take proper care, he will soon be bare-ars'd. You'll get a bad character, my brethren, when the inhabitants of the neighbourhood see how you neglect your patron: You buy new petticoats every day for your wives, you grant them what they desire of you; you do

well; but d'ye think that when a great ladle of melted lead is popp'd into your mouths, they will bring you a glass of lemonade to cool your throats. Then you will repent of having by your negligence deserv'd to be rank'd among heretics: Alas! great St. Julian (you will say) what a sinner was I, that I did not give you the money that I laid out upon lace for Kate! and that I did not make you a present of that piece of stuff which I brought from the fair. All this repentance will be to no purpose then, dear brethren; St. Julian won't thank you for it, and you must shew your zeal for him now while you live. I hear some of you complaining that the harvests are bad, We have had no wine (say you) this year; and two years ago we had no corn. I am apt to believe it, brethren: but it will be much worse for the future. Can you sincerely imagine, that St. Julian will address himself to God to ask for rain, sunshine, warm weather or cold weather, as the case shall require, for people that let him wear a coat till tis three years old? You are mistaken my brethren; you will be treated like heretics, for whom there's no salvation, and who were from their mother's womb the devil's inheritance, for as soon as a Calvinist or a Lutheran comes into the world, the devil registers him in the other world in his book, as an estate that is fallen to him."

Such discourses as this render instruction contemptible, base, and cheap. The temple where the word of God ought to be explain'd to men, becomes a stage for mountebanks. 'Tis impertinent to say, that the common people ought to be preach'd to, in a different manner from that in which we discourse to people of learning. A moral which is pure and easy to be comprehended, may be expressed without stuffing the mind with a hundred ridiculous stories invented by avarice. The new coat which this preacher wanted to be bought for St. Julian, might have been productive of another for himself into the bargain. But what! ought a priest, for vile lucre, to depart from that character, which puts him in a rank of respect?

ought a minister of God's word to blend it with gross fables, enough to disgust not only those who are not of the Nazarene faith, but such also as are most convinc'd of it?

One can't be too careful in examining the learning and capacity of those to whom the liberty of preaching is granted; for they thereby become the common guides of the understanding of a whole people, and they are to be consider'd as the chief external objects that produce ideas in the minds of a number of people, who see and know nothing but by them. Of what importance therefore is it to the good of society, that the notions which they give them be just, and conformable to right reason?

Take care of thy health, dear Monceca, and live content and happy.

LETTER LXIX.

A short view of the ruins of Alexandria.—An inquiry into the origin of the antient Egyptians, and their language.—The character of the Bedouins; their customs and manners.—Their concise method of determining law-suits.—Reflections on the inconveniences arising from tedious law-suits.

ISAAC ONIS TO AARON MONCECA.

Alexandria.—

THE winds have favoured me to such a degree, dear Monceca, that in nine days time I am arrived at Alexandria from Smyrna. This city heretofore of such fame for the great men it produced, for the magnificence of its buildings, and for the glory of its founder, is nothing more than a confused pile of unsightly ruins, columns, chapiters, bases, remnants of cornishes, &c. all which remains of antiquity lie scatter'd about, and topsy-turvy, bury'd partly in the sand, or employ'd to purposes very different from those to which the antient inhabitants had devoted them. The ruins of antient Alexandria are not like those of Old Rome, of which there are fragments

still subsisting that retain a part of their former beauty. It may be said of Alexandria, as Virgil said of Troy after its ruin *. The fields and the place where this stately city was built are still to be seen; that so celebrated watch-tower, by the antients reckon'd among the seven wonders of the world, which by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus was erected by Sostratus of Gnidus, subsists no longer, but is buried under water, and scarce any traces of it are to be seen. Near these ruins there is a tower built, which serves for a light-house to ships in the night.

This work was erected under Mahometan princes, but does not come up by any means to the magnificence and splendor of the old Pharos, the first story of which was a vast apartment of white marble. And over this superb structure, there was a square tower of an extraordinary height, built of the same marble.

Before I tell thee of the ruins of ancient Alexandria, the buildings of the new city, the pyramids of Cairo, and the antiquities in this capital of Egypt, I will give thee a general character of the inhabitants of this country, and in laying open their manners and character to the best of my power, I shall compare them with those of the ancient Egyptians. In doing this, I foresee that I shall have an opportunity to gratify thy curiosity, and that I shall be able to inform thee of many particulars, that have escaped the curiosity of travellers.

In Egypt was our nation form'd; in this country did it grow and multiply; there it was that the promises which God made to Abraham, began to have their effect, and in the same country happen'd the first miracles, wrought by the Almighty, to deliver his people from slavery.

The origin of the ancient Egyptians is altogether unknown to us; their Dynasties include the fabulous history of sixteen or seventeen thousand years; which is a fable, or rather a folly, that all nations have seen, or are still guilty of, more or less. The Ethi-

* Et campos ubi Troja fuit. Virg. *Æn.* lib. iii.

opians and the Chinese claim the preference as to antiquity. The Nazarene people, who are oblig'd to fix the creation of the world very near where the Hebrews do, affect to derive their descent as far as possible from the most antient people. They cannot go higher than the deluge; but they indeavoured to invent fables, deriving their origin from the times nearest to it. Some of the antient poets and historians of France make their nation descend in a direct line from Aftyanax the son of Hector. The dynasties of the Egyptians, being altogether as fabulous as the pretended origin of the Trojans, it were better to own frankly an ignorance of the manner how, and the time when, Egypt was peopled, than to look for truth in a number of fables that have no appearance of it.

The Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabians and Turks, have, in their turns, subdued the antient inhabitants of Egypt, and introduced themselves into the country. The descendants of the primitive Egyptians, are at this day called Coptes; these are the true natives of the country, but their number compar'd to the foreigners there, is extremely small. The civil wars of the Romans were the first cause of the ruin of Egypt. The Greek Nazarene emperors put many of the inhabitants of the kingdom to death, and persecuted many others from an aversion to the heresy of Dioscorus, the patriarch of Alexandria, whose doctrine then was, and is still embraced by the Egyptian nation. The Arabian and Mahometan princes almost compleated the ruin of the antient Egyptians, so that now the Coptic language is no longer understood by the Coptes themselves; the last who knew it having been dead some years.

The books and writings in that idiom are what we shall never recover, the knowledge of hieroglyphics was lost heretofore in the same manner, and had it not been for the aid of printing, the Greek perhaps would have had the same fate in process of time. The number of Turks and Jews increases every day in Constantinople, whereas that of the Greeks

sens visibly. For a long time past the modern Greek language has had nothing in common with the antient Greek, or at least very little. By degrees all the people in the Levant will come to write in the Turkish language, so that the Greek characters won't perhaps be known five hundred years hence by any but some of the most learned English, French, German and Dutch Nazarenes; and the antient inhabitants of Greece will have no occasion for them any more than they have for the antient language, which they have already disused.

Besides the Coptes, there are two other sort of inhabitants in Egypt, the first of whom are call'd the Establiſhed Bedouins, and the latter, the Wandering Bedouins. The former live in the villages and country houses, and are to be considered as the peasants of the country. The Wandering Bedouins lead the same life as the antient patriarchs, they live under tents upon the milk of their cattle, and shift their habitations for the convenience of pasture; they always encamp in places where they can easily come at water; some sojourn near the mountains, and others near to places that are inhabited.

The Turks have a very great regard for the Wandering Bedouins; they abandon their lands to them for cultivation, that they may have no quarrel with a people that may do them a great deal of mischief, and whom it is not in their power to hurt. They need never be in any fear of the Turks, because they can retire a hundred leagues into the deserts, where it is very easy for them to subsist, by their frugality, and knowledge of the wells. They are not incumbered in their march by the quantity of their baggage, for the camels carry their tents and their mats made of rushes; these being all their furniture, beds, palaces and temples. These people, dear Monceca, are sonder of their rural life, than the courtiers are of the pageantry and bustle of a court*. With them
the

* *Beatus ille, qui, procul negotiis,
Ut prisca gens mortalium, &c.*

the golden age is still in being; their cattle furnish them with their most delicate dishes of meat, and their cattle provide for their other occasions. The wool of their sheep suffices to clothe them, for they make a stuff with it, which defends them from the injuries of the air. They look upon those to be madmen, who build immense palaces, and yet think they live in a narrow compass. Don't cares and perplexities, say they, inhabit in those stately buildings? If man has no more content nor satisfaction in them, than we have under our tents, why should we be at the trouble of building them?

Men, dear Monceca, by building towns have made themselves slaves to one another; for they are obliged to grant titles to private men, who form chains by which they themselves are bound. Those bastions, citadels, and fortifications, are by length of time become as hurtful to the people, as they thought them useful for a guard against their enemies: For they with whom these forts were trusted, have by means thereof attained to absolute power; and the first men that liv'd in towns were the first slaves.

The Bedouins have no need to assemble their general states for preserving their liberty; for they have no disputes; no civil war; they find pasture and water wherever they go; and that is their best treasure; their industry, and frugality furnishing them with every thing else. They have no difference about religion, no wrangling doctors and divines. If the

Thus translated by Mr. Creech.

Happy the man, beyond pretence,
(Such was the state of innocence)
That loose from care, from business free,
From griping debts and usury,
Contented in an humble fate,
With his own oxen plows his own estate:
No early trumpet breaks his ease,
He doth not dread the angry seas:
He flies the bar, from noise retreats,
And shuns the nobles haughty seats.

Hor. Epod. lib. Ode ii.

most

most zealous Janfenists and Molinists, of whom thou hast often made mention in thy letters, had been born Beduins, they wou'd have pass'd their lives without being disturb'd by the rage of opposite parties, always ready to murder one another. With these happy people, dear Monceca, there's no tent encompass'd with ditches, guarded by soldiers, and set apart for the confinement of prisoners of state. The Beduins never rais'd palaces to revenge, and made it no crime for their brethren to think differently from themselves; but they had every one the liberty always of praying to the Deity in the Turkish, Arabic, Persian, or even the French language, if they had a fancy for it.

An enemy were he ever so potent, wou'd not be able with the assistance of a scrap of paper obtain'd by the favour of a Bedouin minister to get an order for a private man to quit his tent, his family, and his flock, and to repair to the confines of Ethiopha, there to stay till farther orders.

A Bedouin musti does not go with a guard of soldiers from one tent to another, to get a subscription to the confession of the Mahometan faith, drawn up in a set form of words, wherein all the virtue of it consists.

Those people are ignorant of edicts, and new regulations for the rising or falling the value of money; never does a Bedouin go to bed with a hundred thousand crowns in his pocket, and rise not worth a penny. The most that he loses is a sheep perhaps, which a wolf may run away with in the night. He pays no tax at coming into the world, nor none at going out.

Councillors, attorneys, sollicitors, the several degrees of jurisdiction, subaltern, inferiour and sovereign, are unknown to the happy Beduins. A suit of law between two persons never lasts above twenty-four hours, for the oldest man of the tribe gives his decision of the matter in question upon the spot and without fees. These people know not how to believe that the cause should sometimes take up a hundred

hundred years in the Nazarene families; and all the Turks in general look upon such talk as only invented to shew the slowness of justice; yet it is true that there are several differences that are not accomodated in the course of a century. A French merchant assur'd me at Constantinople, that he prosecuted a suit in the parliament at Grenoble, which was depending no less than a hundred and twenty years.

How ridiculous is this, dear Monceca, or rather how avaricious? What, cannot a controversy be decided betwixt two men, but it must take up more time than their lives? Are not a hundred and twenty years sufficient to declare whether such an estate belongs to Jacob or to Isaac? Happy are the Bedouins, who still retaining the first impressions of nature, have not thrown a cloud over their reason by such ridiculous customs!

I have often talk'd with the Nazarenes concerning the length of their law suits; they think they come off well enough by returning for answer, that tho' justice is very slow with them, yet 'tis good, and given with very great wisdom. But how now! does it absolutely require ages to judge of an affair prudently? Must one and the same suit be examin'd thro' three or four generations? and must the judges from the father to the son intail certain law-suits upon them, the fees of which run away with a part of the revenue of the family? In order to judge solidly of a process, is it necessary to ruin the two parties entirely, and to consume in law expences more than the sum in dispute? 'Tis in vain, dear Monceca, for the Nazarenes to offer to plead the equity of their courts of justice, as an excuse for the defects and slowness of their proceedings. Their painters draw justice holding a balance; but it often turns to that side that has most money, at least many people complain so. 'There's not a private man but trembles when he is sued by a nobleman who has a powerful interest. A bad token this of the opinion which the people have of the integrity of their judges; but the case is not the same with the wandering Bedouins, from the

heads of whose tribes a man that has but a hundred sheep, is sure to have as much justice as he that has two thousand, and it seldom happens, after such determination pass'd, that the person condemn'd complains or makes others afraid of submitting to the same award.

Take care of thy health, dear Monceca, and may the God of our Fathers prosper thee with abundance.

L E T T E R LXX.

The ruins of Alexandria, convey a grand idea of its antient splendor.—Very little marble us'd in the public edifices in France; therefore liable to a speedy decay.—The Jews some years ago offered the pope twenty millions, for leave to search the Tyber and take away, its wealth; but refused.—Lewis XIV. purchased some antiques at Rome, which were oblig'd to be convey'd away by night for fear of the populace.—Great disputes at Paris about altering the Breviary.

AARON MONCECA TO ISAAC ONIS.

Paris—

TH Y letter dear Isaac, has given me very great pleasure. I find their reflections to be solid and useful, and shall think myself very happy, if thou wilt be so good as to continue to give me light into those things in Egypt, which are in thy opinion worthy of the curiosity and attention of a philosopher.

The ruins of Alexandria, scatter'd and bury'd as they are, still convey a grand idea of the antient splendour of that city. Those pieces of marble that are seen there, those chapters, as much demolish'd as they are, offer still something noble to the imagination; for those stately ruins represent to the mind the grandeur and magnificence of those piles of building, when they were standing and entire.

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If Paris and most of the cities of France, should happen to be destroy'd, 'twould be difficult five hundred years after it to discover any traces of the most pompous structures. For want of marble the structures that are already decaying, wou'd soon be bury'd in oblivion; because stone only resists the shocks of weather when 'tis join'd to other buildings, but after it is separated from the main building, it soon loses the form it had receiv'd from the hand of the workman. There's not one marble pillar in all the public edifices at Paris: And Versailles, where Lewis XIV. laid not such immense sums, does, not contain so much marble, the statutes excepted, as the palaces of some senators at Genoa. The carv'd work of the front of the Tuilleries is already nibbled and damag'd by time, tho' the structure is not yet finish'd.

The ruins of the cities in the Archipelago have for several ages engag'd the curiosity of travellers, yet the Turks lessen them every day, and carry away vast quantities of their marble. How much therefore must there have been of it at first? The mosque of the sultan Achmet was built only of the stones fetch'd from the ruins of Troy. The columns which form the peristyl of that temple, and which are not less than an hundred and thirty in number, were found all entire in the fields of that antient city; for near two hundred years the Turks made use of no other bullets for the cannon of the Dardanelles, than Corinthian chapters and columns which they broke to pieces, and then cut to make them serve that purpose. What a vast number of structures only built of marble must there have been formerly in Greece! How many triumphal arches, porticos, perystiles, fountains and pillars? Rome had not so many superstructures as Greece, if we may judge by the number of marble pieces, and the other works of architecture that have escap'd the fury of the times. I own that there must be prodigious wealth in the Tyber, and that to be sure there are more statutes in its channel, than there are in Rome now; but all these treasures

asures are conceal'd from our sight, and we cannot judge of what we do not see.

About forty years ago, our brethren the Jews offer'd twenty millions to the sovereign pontiff, to get leave of him to search the Tyber, and to turn the course of it for only six months, and propos'd to examine it one league above, and another below that city. 'Tis very certain that in the space of those two leagues they would have found ten times the value of their premium. However, said they, as they ran a risque of losing their twenty millions, they desir'd that for their greater ease in that work, they might be allow'd to turn off the Tiber in the summer, which clause was the very thing that defeated their petition. Twenty millions was a sum very tempting, and the matter was debated more than once or twice; but at length it was judg'd, that the great heats might draw such exhalations from the drain'd channel, as wou'd breed a pestilence, and therefore their request was deny'd. For my part, dear Isaac, I am of opinion that the apprehension of distempers was only a cloak made use of to cover the real reasons of that refusal. The Jews wou'd have sold all the treasure, the statues, the bronzes, the medals, and the columns which they wou'd have found, out of the city, because no body in it wou'd have been rich enough to have paid down the money for them, which many sovereign princes and rich private men abroad wou'd have given. 'Twas the same political reason that hindred the removal of the pictures and statues from Rome: And had it not been for this wise regulation, that city wou'd have been strip'd long ago of abundance of fine things which the nobility and citizens wou'd have sold; and by degrees foreigners becoming possess'd at home of what drew them to Rome, would have resorted to that city no longer, which wou'd have been a notorious prejudice to it. This regulation has been so rigidly adher'd to, that the great dukes of Tuscany never cou'd obtain leave for the removal of old Her-

cules out of their palace at Rome to their own dominions.

Lewis XIV. in the time of his greatest splendour, made a purchase at Rome of a part of the antiques that are in the gallery of Versailles; and the person commission'd to send them to France, was Poussin the famous painter, who was a subject of his majesty. The sovereign pontiff not being able to help it, gave his consent; but in order to keep peace with the populace, and to prevent a tumult, they were oblig'd to embark them in the night-time, when no body knew any thing of the matter. 'Tis true, that if Lewis XIV. had pleas'd, he cou'd have oblig'd the magistrates of Rome to send them to him themselves, for he was then so much dreaded at Rome, that no body durst refuse it him; but he was for avoiding all discussions, which, when those they have to deal with don't act with vigour, the Romans spin out to eternity; so that it requires more time to settle the least incident with them, than to conclude a general peace throughout Europe. Impertinence and chicanery seem to be the province of the Nazarene priests, but of no people more than the Jansenists and Molinists, who when they cannot dispute with their enemies, and gainsay them, pick a quarrel with their own brethren and adherents: Of which the following is a recent instance.

The pontiff of Paris, of whom I have not yet made any mention in my letters, is very much hated by the Jansenists, who have aim'd to blacken his reputation by defamatory libels; but the better sort of people have not suffer'd themselves to be prejudiced by these invectives. The pontiff is very much of a gentleman. Before he came to Paris he had govern'd another church, where he was universally beloved even by the Jansenists. He was rais'd to the chief ecclesiastical dignity in the kingdom, and sell a sacrifice to it; for being oblig'd to stand his ground against all the efforts of the Jansenists party, he soon regretted the loss of that tranquility which he had enjoy'd in his old diocese: however he endeavour'd

to sweeten their tempers as much as he could. Being an enemy to violent and rigorous measures, he was desirous that an accommodation might be enter'd into sincerely. But the good man did not very well know the people he had to do with: The Jansenists were so enrag'd against him, that they even reproach'd him for eating too much; as if his appetite had been a crime, and as if a puny stomach was essential to righteousness. Finding at length that all he could do would be to no purpose, he let things take their course. Complaint had been made a long time in his diocese, that a book which the Nazarenes call a Breviary, wanted much to be regulated. 'Tis a collection of the psalms of the royal prophet, with a mixture of some prayers of their own composing. The pontiff order'd the men skill'd in the Nazarene law to compose a new Breviary. While this was doing, all the Jansenists murmur'd and rav'd sadly against the book, and those that compos'd it. The Molinists, on the contrary, gave out every where, that the work, which would soon appear, was excellent. It did appear, and by a merry accident the Jansenists receiv'd it with very great respect, and the Molinists declaim'd against it with very great rage; so that they fill'd Paris with their seditious writings. Two priests there are * among others, who have solemnly protested that they will not abandon their old Breviary; one of them especially raves and tears at a deadly rate †; he is a religious coxcomb, who is like enough one day or other to introduce the convulsions of the Jansenists among the Molinists. He says that the new Breviary is a book full of dangerous errors; that it deserves to be burnt; that his pontiff had in all appearance gorg'd too much when he approv'd it; and that he appeals from the Afternoon pontiff to the Morning pontiff. The parliament, which does not think his arguments very excellent, maintains that the Breviary is right and good,

* Languet, the cure, or parson of St. Sulpice; and the parson of St. Nicholas de Chardonneret.

† The parson of St. Sulpice.

and that as such it ought to be receiv'd. That sovereign court has since condemn'd a certain writing, which was shrewdly suspected to be the composition of some fanatical priest, to be torn and burnt by the common hangman. Mean time the affair of the Breviary is not yet ended; the angry Molinists say 'tis good for nothing, and that 'tis impossible for an arret of parliament to make bad merchandize good. They compare this book to rusty bacon, which is enough to spoil the best sauce; consequently, say they, the book is enough to poison the soundest mind. From whence the Nazarenes fetch'd this comparison, I know not; for 'tis perfectly in the Hebrew taste, and what wou'd have been very significant in the mouth of a Jew, considering the aversion we naturally have to the hog, an unclean animal, the flesh of which is forbid us by our holy law.

There is nothing now stirring at Paris but the dispute about this Breviary. I will take care to inform thee in what manner it ends; 'tis probable that the priests will be oblig'd to submit, for the secular judges have a way to punish them, which cuts them to the very heart, namely, by stripping them of their revenues; the clergy being so selfish, that this is the only way to bring to them to the point where you wou'd have them.

As to the person who has declar'd in the most public manner against the introduction of this new book, they say of him particularly, that he makes his money his God. He is building a magnificent temple, but they say, 'tis worth more to him than the workmen whom he employs. Under the specious pretence of a collection towards the charges of the building, and decoration of it, he receives money from all hands. 'Tis all the same thing to him who has no manner of exception to the money, which is still money, come from whomsoever it will. I am positive he wou'd not think it a trouble to receive profit from the common whores at Paris, if he was to be permitted to lay a tax upon their trade. He wou'd build his temple, as that famous Egyptian courtesan built one of the pyramids of Egypt,

of the profits she got by the sparks to whom she granted her favours.

Perhaps dear Isaac, thou wilt be astonish'd at the obstinacy of this clergyman in endeavouring to distinguish himself thus singly from all his brethren. He hopes by his rebellion to make his court to the sovereign pontiff, 'Tis by these bold strokes, that a private man makes himself known, and renders his name considerable among the madmen of the party that he has embrac'd: And the court of Rome, for which no body ever does any service in vain, is sure, sooner or later, to reward such blind zeal. Thus the most criminal undertakings are often the best recompenc'd. In all places, and especially amongst the clergy, there are Erostratus's of this modern sort, who, to get a name, set every thing in a flame, and raise sudden hurricanes in times of the greatest calm.

Some years ago, a pontiff that was an outrageous Molinist*, publish'd a paper in violation of the regard that he owed to the king his master, and to the welfare of his country; which proceeding of his was suppos'd to have been owing to the instigation of the Jesuits, tho' they had no share in it. The pontiff having heard it, declar'd publicly, that the Jesuits were so far from having a hand in the performance which he had publish'd, that they did what they could to hinder it, and of this I make no doubt. The Jesuits, tho' they are the most rigid Molinist, yet they are the most politic: The silly things done by those who are attach'd to them, are a very great discredit to them; and if they could always restrain their tempers, the subaltern Molinists wou'd not commit many follies that they are guilty off. But let the general officers of an army have ever so much foresight, 'tis impossible for them to hinder the folly of a soldier, a sutler, or the foot-soldier's post-boy.

Farewell, dear Isaac; and may the God of our Fathers grant thee riches in abundance.

* The archbishop of Arles.

LETTER LXXI.

Some passages relating to Theodore king of Corsica.— Political reflections concerning the island of Corsica.— Theodore treats those of his subjects, suspected not to be in his interest, with great rigour.— Murder and slaughter for suspected disaffection, rather increase the spirit of party than suppress it.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris—

THE news from Corsica, dear Isaac, differs very much, and people begin to doubt whether the project of the pretended king Theodore will succeed; money fails him, and the succours that he had promis'd are not arriv'd. A third party is formed in the island, and the Genoese hope to see their affairs soon retriev'd, or at least they give out so. I must tell thee plainly, dear Monceca, that after having reasoned a long time upon the transactions in Corsica I frankly own, that I know not what to make of it. I talk with politicians here every day, who are mighty speculators, and lay open the whole mystery of this adventure, with as much assurance as if they were let into the most secret particulars of it. They pretend to know the famous magician that protects this knight-errant; they know from whence comes the assistance he has had hitherto; and they tell you the particulars of what he is to expect. But after having heard them for a good while, when one comes to reflect upon what they have said, 'tis plain that 'tis all meer guess-work, and that it cannot stand the test of examination.

If one considers Theodore in the light of a fortune-hunter, if we believe what the Genoese say of him, his arrival in Corsica has something as extraordinary in it as the prodigious rise of Tamerlane, as some Arabian authors say, was only the son of a shepherd; and 'tis really not near so surprizing for a private centinel of the Tartars, to become master

head of his country, as it is to see a private man, one of the vulgar rank, get himself to be declar'd king in the centre of Europe, and in sight too of a great many princes, jealous of the grandeur and majesty of their rank, which would be depreciated, if a notorious fortune-hunter shou'd become their equal. For, in short, if by chance the Genoese should be entirely drove out of the Island of Corsica, and Theodore shou'd be recogniz'd by all the inhabitants for their sovereign lord and master, I wou'd know what the sovereign powers of Europe would do in that case? Cou'd such monarchs as the emperor and the king of France, find in their hearts ever to recognize for a lawful sovereign, a king crown'd by a rebellion form'd by wickedness, and who before he became a sovereign did, as they say, more than once dishonour the character of a gentleman? I don't believe there's any body silly enough to imagine, that those princes wou'd behave in that manner. But, on the other hand, Theodore wou'd have dominions, subjects, ships, harbours, towns, &c. and when any quarrel happens with him, as 'tis impossible but there must, upon what foot shou'd he be treated with? France wou'd even be forc'd to it by the situation of Corsica; for there are few ships that set out from Marseilles for the Levant, but what anchor either going or coming upon the coasts of Corsica.

Several persons resolve these difficulties, by saying, that as soon as Theodore is master and peaceable possessor of his country, another power wou'd expel him out of it. But I ask, whether such reasoning is consistent with good policy? I think 'tis altogether the reverse of it; and that unless all those difficulties between the European powers are prevented, before they go about to expel Theodore, the power that shou'd undertake it wou'd find several princes ready to oppose him. But, as some people say, every thing is already settled and concluded, and they all know what they have to trust to: This is what I shall inquire into hereafter, but in the mean time I think this opinion liable to a world of objections. I really consider

consider (supposing that Theodore acts only upon his own bottom) what obstacles that power would meet with, who should offer to drive him out of Corsica, if he was once in peaceable possession of it. Suppose Spain should be that power, 'twould be the interest of France strenuously to oppose that nation's having a country with towns and harbours which entirely block up those of Marseilles, Toulon, and Antibes: For in case the Spaniards were to have a war with France, they would, with two frigates of twenty guns each, absolutely interrupt the trade to the Levant. In a storm, the merchant-ships would be oblig'd to go for shelter to very distant ports, and sometimes would be able to find none, especially if the wind should hinder them from making the coast of Italy. The island of Corsica, in the hands of so formidable a power as the Spaniards, would be troublesome to the Catalans, if they should ever be masters of the island of Majorca. Do but cast thy eye, dear Isaac, upon a map, and thou wilt be convinc'd thyself of the truth of my opinion.

France would not be the only power oblig'd, in interest to hinder the Spaniards from having the island of Corsica. Undoubtedly the king of Sardinia would be very loth to consent to it: Nice, Villa-Franca, and his other maritime towns being already so much press'd up and cramp'd by France, that I don't believe he would care to have another neighbour so incommodeous. Some politicians are of opinion, that the European powers would freely consent that the king of Sardinia should be master of the island of Corsica. But France has the same reason to oppose the Piedmontese as to oppose the Spaniards; because, though the former are not near so powerful as the latter, they might become very troublesome to France, whenever they should unite with other powers against her. What would become of Toulon and all Provence, if the English and Dutch had it in their power to form magazines, and to have a number of towns and sea-ports but forty leagues from Provence, and to be able to

come in twenty-four hours time to anchor there with a Squadron whenever they pleased.

If it be almost as much the interest of France as of Spain, to see the English dispossess'd of Port Mahon, how much more is she oblig'd in interest, not to let a formidable power establish itself in those ports that block up all her harbours in the Mediterranean? Some people think that she wou'd not be very uneasy, if those ports were in the hands of the king of Naples and Sicily; but this argument is so weak that it confutes itself. The union of the courts of Madrid and Naples is so strict, their interests are so united, that the same reasons which oppose the Spaniards oppose the Neapolitans. Besides, all men are mortal, soveraigns themselves being not exempted by the Deity from the laws of death. If the prince of Asturias, who has no children, shou'd happen to die, are not those ports in the hands of Spain, and by consequence of a formidable power? But some will say, who knows whether by the secret articles of the very treaties that wou'd render the Neapolitans masters of the country, they wou'd not be oblig'd to abandon it to another prince, the very moment that their sovereign shou'd become king of Spain? To this I answer, that an able politician will never rely upon the faith of restitutions. The councils of princes are as fruitful in excuses as the society of Jesuits is; they never want plausible pretences, and they make use of the privilege of the direction of the intention. The English are lately become very Jesuits upon this head; and I believe they have been oblig'd to those reverend fathers for several arguments, with regard to the article of Gibraltar and Port Mahon. And what might not the Spaniards do, who are prone by nature to follow the direction of the Jesuits?

These, dear Isaac, are the reasons which incline me to suspect that Theodore does not act upon his own bottom, but is directed by a Primum Mobile. His want of money, and of a sufficient number of forces; the slowness with which he goes on, and his

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not having yet perform'd a single action that can be decisive ; all this together confirms me in my opinion.

But, on the other hand, when I come to consider that the Baron de Newhoff was a slave two years ago, that he was sick in a hospital three years ago, that he has spent his patrimony long since ; and when I see him arriv'd in Corsica with chests full of gold coin, and with eight brass cannon, the least of which cost above two thousand crowns, I know not what to think of it. Two or three hundred thousand livres is not a sum to be borrow'd upon slender hopes, which even appear ridiculous to any that will but examine them. How then could the Baron de Newhoff compass those supplies with which he has furnished the Corsicans ? If he had them not from private hands, he must needs have had them from some sovereign power ; and if it is some sovereign that assists, supports, and protects him, why does he abandon him to necessity ? Why does he suffer him to want money, and expose him to the hazard of employing the first sums he gave him to no purpose ?

One is perfectly lost and bewilder'd in the attempt to dive to the bottom of these reflections. There are politicians who think it easy to unfold all these secrets. As for my part, I own sincerely, that I can comprehend but little, if any thing, of the matter. Perhaps they who fancy they know the mystery, are as ignorant of it as I am ; but they are not so candid, and wou'd fain pass their conjectures upon the world for real facts. This is too much the foible of all politicians ; nothing puts them to a stand, and they readily find reasons to solve the greatest difficulties. They penetrate into the very cabinets of princes ; they know the most secret thing that passes there, and they foretel the end of a war before 'tis scarce begun. In fine, they regulate all the courts of Europe ; but unhappily for themselves and their predictions, they are as much mistaken as the makers of almanacks.

It must be time, dear Isaac, that will clear up this confused chaos of ideas, which mankind forms upon the Baron de Newhoff's undertaking. Mean while

us suspend our judgment. There are ten or twelve people in Enrope that know the secret of this affair ; and to be sure 'tis an infinite pleasure to them, to hear what other folks say. We shall one day have the same advantage as they have now ; and when the intricacy is clear'd up, the vain conjectures which we form at present will be an amusement to us in our turn.

As soon as I learn any thing new, I will let thee know it by a letter, and shall take care to inform myself exactly of what may serve for our instruction. After all, they give out here, that the said lord Theodore treats his new subjects with very great rigour, those especially whom he suspects to be against him. A bare suspicion is with him such a crime, that nothing but death can atone for it. He has caus'd four of the chief men that were against him to be shot to death, but I think he wou'd have done much better to pardon them ; for such an instance of his generosity wou'd have won him many more hearts, than a slavish fear will ever retain in respect and submission.

I can't but think that the blood which is spilt upon scaffolds in civil wars, produces the same effect as that of the primitive Nazarenes, which the pagan emperors shed with so much rage. The more of them that were put to death, the more the number of 'em increas'd. The very same thing happens in civil wars ; the spirit of party is heated by murder and slaughter, and the death of one person determines a hundred to espouse his party. The murderer is sure to be hated, and he that dies will infallibly be pity'd. The death of the famous admiral de Coligni, and of the other protestants, only serv'd to increase the number of Henry IV's adherents. The losses which the catholic cantons sustain'd in their last war, united them more than ever together. Since the intire suppression of the religion of the Nazarene papists in Ireland, the number of the Nazarenes of that faith is rather increased there than diminish'd. The deposing of the pontiff of the city of Senes, in the council of Ambrun, very much augmented the number of Jansenists in France. People are much sooner reclaim'd by lenity, than by violent and bloody methods. Philip II's
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character for cruelty, gave the first blow to the Spanish monarchy, and made him lose those countries that now form the republic of Holland.

Take care of thy health, dear Isaac, and may the God of our fathers give thee an abundant measure of prosperity.

L E T T E R LXXII.

A description of Lausanne.—Character of the Swissers.—An account of a cruel war between the popish and protestant cantons; fomented by the abbot of St. Gall.—Switzerland more remarkable for producing lovers of the bottle than ingenious men.—Critical remarks on one of their writers.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Lausanne.—

BEFORE I cou'd pursue my rout thro' Lyons and Languedoc, in order to make the best of my way to Lisbon, I was oblig'd to go and pass a few days at Lausanne. I have receiv'd passports for six months from the courts of Spain and Portugal, so that I can now do all my business quietly, without being terrify'd by the priests or the inquisition. Samuel Pinaro has procur'd a commission for me to be agent extraordinary to the republic of Genoa, while I stay at Lisbon, which title gives me a character that puts me out of all manner of danger; I doubt not but to discover a great many things in the voyage I purpose to make, which may be the foundation of some philosophical reflections, and I will write to thee from Spain, as constantly as I have done from Italy.

I have few things to acquaint thee of at present. Lausanne is a very pretty town, being the capital of the Pays de Vaux in the canton of Bern. The people here live much more after the French fashion than they do in the other towns, yet in general they partake of the manners and customs of their brethren, and the produce of the country is just the same as that of

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the other cantons. The wine here is very good, and their lakes and rivers abound with all manner of fish; nor is there any want of fowl and all other necessities of life. In this climate, nature furnishes the inhabitants with every thing that is fit for their use, and is only sparing in the things that introduce luxury, and encourage debauchery.

The Switzers are inur'd to all the hardships of hunger and thirst, cold and heat; they live very cheap, milk and cheese being their principal food*. Cooks are of no use with them, or have very little employment; they being ignorant of the art of mixing poisons that are pernicious to health and long life, under the name of nice ragoûts, and savoury dishes. Their houses are but indifferent, and their furniture is as plain as that of the primitive times: Their apparel which is made for their use, and not to dazzle the eyes of the spectators, is proportion'd to the rest; but so many virtues are obscur'd by one considerable fault; for they are most abominable drunkards. They sometimes spend days and nights in continual debauchery, and there's no hopes of getting a place in their hearts, but by a glass in the hand; wine being with them the cement of friendship. In Switzerland the greatest drinker is reckon'd the best man, and he that can carry off his six or seven bottles of wine, is as much courted at their entertainments, as a poet or a facetious author is in France, at their parties of pleasure. If Chapelle* and St. Evremond had liv'd in Switzerland, they wou'd have past for a couple of pitiful fellows, not worthy to be admitted into good company.

Whatsoever pleasure the Switzers take in drinking, yet as soon as their debaucheries are over, they go to their business and double their industry and diligence to retrieve their expences. "They work to drink, says

* This must chiefly be understood of their mountaineers and valets.

† Yet the author of the life of Moliere represents him at first as an agreeable debauchee, if not a very drunkard.

a modern author, and they drink the better to work. Their inclination to wine does not hinder them from being prudent and circumspect in affairs public and private ; so that to be sure the fumes of the wine don't get up into their brains so much as they do into those of other people ; for there's no treaty, agreement, lease, or contract made without the bottle in hand, to wet the bargain with the bewitching liquor. Nor are their politics the worse for their tippling, for after having drink all day long, a Swiss knows perfectly well what is for the benefit and happiness of his country. This is a sort of miracle, but 'tis so plain a case that its reality cannot be doubted, the cantons having maintain'd their liberty for so many ages against several princes, that would fain have subdued them. 'Tis to their union that they owe their preservation, and the esteem they have acquir'd all over Europe, in which there are no princes but what are very glad to be their allies.

The Switzers are got into a method of having a great number of well disciplin'd and experienc'd soldiers, that cost them nothing ; they send their youth to serve in foreign countries ; a great many sovereign princes have Swiss regiments in their pay, which are constantly recruited by men that the cantons give leave for raising in their own country. But as fast as the young fellows list and go out of their country for a certain time, they who preceded them obtain their dismissal, and return to their own country, perfectly bred up and train'd in the art of war. Besides these soldiers that are form'd out of Switzerland, they take great care to make all the citizens and tradesmen perform military exercise on particular days of the year, and the very peasants themselves are not exempt from this service, who after having work'd certain days of the week for themselves, employ the rest for the public good and safety of the country.

Tho' these precautions are very well judg'd, yet the cantons have little to fear from the invasions of foreigners ; the inaccessible mountains of the Alps serve them for ramparts, and there's not a prince in Europe

rope, that, be it either from fear or from interest, durst attack them : For were he after an expensive war to subdue them, what he wou'd get by it in fifty years time, wou'd not countervail the expence of one single campaign. If the Switzers are ever in danger of being destroy'd, it can be only by themselves ; for as long as they continue united, they will subsist as they have done hitherto ; but if ever they are divided among themselves, if hatred, discord and envy get room in their hearts, they will themselves do that in a little time, which was out of the power of all Europe.

Some years ago the popish and protestant cantons had a cruel war ; the division was occasion'd by a monk call'd the Abbot of St. Gall ; for in all the dominions of the Nazarenes, it seems that always disputes and dissention are owing to the turbulent spirit of the monks and priests. This Abbot put himself at the head of the popish cantons, and like another Joshua, he said he was resolv'd to extirpate all the enemies of God's people ; which was the name that he gave to the Swiss protestants. For this end he had given to every soldier billets, containing lists of the men that each of them was to murder. One was oblig'd to cut the throats of five, another of six, another of seven, and every one more or less, in short, according as the Abbot judg'd that the soldier whom he commission'd for that purpose, had more or less strength and courage. He drew up his army, and before the battle began, he promis'd a place in heaven to those who died in the field, and a great many other indulgences on the part of the sovereign pontiff to those that shou'd perform the orders of the ticket. After this he retir'd prudently to sleep in a whole skin, and left it to his officers to take care of the rest. But things did not answer his expectation by a great deal ; for his army was intirely defeated, the murdering tickets had no effects, and this modern Joshua was so far from praying to the Deity to stop the course of the war, to give him time for the compleat overthrow of his enemies, that he pray'd to it earnestly to bring on

night and darkness, in order to save him and the rest of his party from the fury and revenge of the Nazarene protestants.

After the battle, the Swiss papists were sensible of the folly they had been guilty of; they were convinc'd how ruinous it wou'd be for them to carry on a war which had prov'd so fatal to them in the beginning, and therefore propos'd a peace to their enemies; who, fond to shake hands again with their brethren, whom discord had torn from them, readily consented to an accommodation that pacify'd all Switzerland, and settled its liberty on such a basis that it cannot be robb'd of it while it continues united. This is a truth of which all the cantons, both papist and protestant, are fully convinc'd, and consequently they endeavour always to live in peace and unity. The Abbot of St. Gall now and then makes fresh attempts to embroil affairs again, and to foment new disputes; but the Swiss papists know better things, having paid so dear for their experience, and the protestants had rather submit and bear with some things patiently, than plunge their country again in a civil war.

Some time after the reformation was introduc'd the difference of opinions making a very great noise, and the magistrates fearing that such jarring sentiments might produce some popular tumult and sedition, they resolv'd unanimously that in those cantons where there were more papists than protestants, every one shou'd hereafter adhere to the interest of the sovereign pontiff, and that in those where the number of his adherents was less than that of his adversaries they shou'd intirely break off communion with him. This was done with as much ease as it was propos'd, all was quiet, and every one liv'd at his own house in peace. The acting with so much prudence and good sense does not denote an inclination to quarrel and contention. The Switzers are the only people capable of entering into measures where there's such a mixture of frankness and candor; nor do they boast of being great philosophers. I don't believe that

there were ever many authors in their country of any great reputation ; for with them a poet is as great a wonder, as an elephant is at Paris ; and in general they have more vessels of wine in their vaults, than volumes in their libraries. It may be said of the Switzers, that they have a great share of good sense, but that their neighbours have all the wit.

I have read a book which is reckoned a masterpiece in this country ; tis intitled, Letters concerning the French and the English ; by a Swiss. This work has had a good vent in foreign parts, but to be plain with thee, tis not worth much ; for the author affects to be witty, and to say pretty things, which is his foible, while he embroils himself with a number of divisions and subdivisions. " *Le beau, says he, n'est pas toujours bon ; mais, le bon doit etre beau. Les Francois n'ont que le beau : Leur beau ne vaut donc pas le bon.* i. e. That which is fair to the eye, is not always good ; but that which is good, must be fair. The French have only the fair, but their fair is not equivalent to the good." Now the whole tendency of this balderdash, this ring of the changes upon the words Bon and Beau, and Beau which is not Bon, is to prove that Boileau, and some other authors of the first class, are mean geniusses, and hardly worth reading. He thinks the English comedies scarce worthy the esteem of good judges ; tho' as to the Belles Lettres, the English have succeeded best, and have produced several excellent pieces. In fine, dear Monceca, notwithstanding so many people have approved of this book, I think it a bad one, writ in a bombastic obscure stile, conveying no lively idea to the imagination, false in its criticisms, and incorrect in its opinions.

I wou'd not venture to say so much in this country as I now write to thee, for the Switzers are very much prepossess'd in favour of this work, and almost as fond of it as they are of the liberty of the citizens, which is their continual topic. But I must tell thee, that this liberty about which they make so much noise, extends only to people of some rank,

for the vulgar are in more subjection here than in any other state. Every bailiff in this country is a petty sovereign, who, as long as his employment holds, thinks of nothing but how to make the most of it: So that the people often groan under the government of some of the bailiffs, whom they love just as much as they deserve, and no more.

All countries, dear Monceca, have their good and their bad; and if we take a survey of the several forms of government, it will appear, that, bating a few things, they are much like one another: I mean the European nations only, out of which I except those, where the inquisition exercises its fury.

Fare thee well, dear Monceca, and live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXIII.

Some further intelligence relating to Theodore king of Corsica.—Political observations concerning the duties between kings and subjects.—Archbishop Cambray's *Telemachus* commended.—Machiavel's political writings, condemn'd.

AARON MONCECA TO ISAAC ONIS.

Paris.—

THEY tell a piece of news here, as diverting as it is extraordinary; "They affirm that the new king of Corsica has wrote to the wife of the steward of the archduchess Mary Magdalen, to acquaint her that he had been elected king of Corsica, and to desire her to procure the necessary passports for a minister whom he intended to send to the court of Vienna." Whether this news be true, I know not; but I don't believe that tis possible for impertinence and stupidity to be carry'd to a greater height than by this notable king Theodore. Where is that mortal who can be a greater fool than he who fancyes that a prince, such as the emperor, would vouchsafe to receive an envoy or an ambassador from rebels that rather deserve his indignation than pro-

testation

fection, because they abused his goodness; and in a few months after he had procured their pardon from the Genoese, rebelled again; and only made use of the emperor's kindness, to favour the new crimes which they were contriving.

But after all, admitting, dear Isaac, that the Corsicans had just reasons for their rebellion, and that the tyranny of the Genoese had forced them to take up arms, can one so much as harbour a thought that the court of Vienna would receive the pretended envoys of a fortune hunter, and a parcel of wretched mountaineers, to the prejudice of a republic which it had always protected. It would be a slur on the majesty of the imperial throne, if it afforded shelter to people of that rank. Rebels are always odious to princes, unless they get by their crimes; and it may be well said, that tho' they love the treason when they find their account in it, yet they hate the traitor. They are afraid lest such monsters should rise in their dominions, as they find in those of their enemies; and if they sometimes reward the crime with one hand, they seek a pretence to punish the criminal with the other. The Spaniards had a vast contempt for the French, who betraying their country, abandon'd their lawful sovereign: They made use of them as tools to their designs, but they were cautious of trusting them with places of importance; they were more cunning politicians, than to be ignorant that they who cou'd disobey their lawful sovereign, might with much more reason betray those to whom they are only attach'd by crimes.

If, dear Isaac, we observe the men who are taxed with just reason for the violation of their faith and their oaths, we shall find that they never stopp'd at the first perjury, but went on from one step to another, till treason became their common practice. They hate actually reduced this crime into an art and a science, and have covered their knavery with the name of State Policy. Fatal stupidity! which, under the veil of an affected precaution, conceals fraud, perjury and dissimulation!

Let

Let the perfidious talent of craftily abusing men's honesty be ever so noxious to society, yet we see that many people, who were weak, or blinded by prejudices, have bestowed great praise upon men that deserved nothing but to be borne down with contempt for their perjuries. They who have commended Sylla, Cæsar, Mark Anthony, and several other imitators of their rapacity, approve the conduct of great rogues, and censure that of little ones; as if it was a greater crime for a man to steal an ox, or a load of bread-corn, than to betray his country.

Let people say what they will in praise of the valour, courage, resolution, prudence, &c. of those to whose rebellion their country's ruin has been owing. I no more admire those virtues in them, than I do the resolution of a highwayman and a murderer, or his foresight in the snares which he lays for travellers.

'Tis not in the subjects only that I require honesty, but I expect to see it likewise in princes. 'Tis in vain to object that their condition requires dissimulation: There's a great difference between dishonesty and the wise and prudent manner of governing. What monarch did ever govern his dominions better than Lewis XII. the father of his people? Where was there a man of more candour and honesty? The frankness and sincerity of Henry IV. defeated all the vain schemes of the Spanish politicians.

They who fancy that a prince is no farther great than he is crafty, are guilty of a wretched mistake. There is a great difference between wisdom and knavery; and tho' in this corrupt age they are called by the same name, yet the wise man easily distinguishes them. A king, tis true, is not obliged to discover his designs to his enemies, nay he ought to take care to conceal them from them; but then he ought not by vain promises, by the lure of a feign'd reconciliation and under the veil of a disguis'd friendship, to tempt them into the snares he lays for their destruction. A great soul, in whatever station, always takes virtue for its guide. A crime is still a crime, and nothing can diminish from its enormity: He who lies,

offends

offends Heaven, and offends himself. A lye has something so odious that it is a shock to the character of a gentleman, whatsoever can be said to mitigate it. The very nations which the Greeks treated as barbarians*, had nevertheless an abhorrence of lyes and fraud. Herodotus † does them this justice: "The Persians, says he, have an infinite contempt for those who falsify their word; and they train their children from five to twenty-five years old in nothing but to draw the bow, to ride on horseback, and to speak the truth."

How many misfortunes, dear Isaac, wou'd never have happen'd in the world, if men were slaves to their oaths, and kept their promises inviolably! How wou'd peace and tranquility flourish in it! kings wou'd always be sure of loyal subjects, and such as are true to the allegiance they have sworn to them. On the other hand, those sovereigns who are careful to perform the conditions they promis'd to observe at their accession to their thrones, wou'd become the fathers of a people easy to obey, and at the same time to be submissive only to justice and equity.

May all those perish, dear Isaac, who are for excusing monarchs from that which is the fittest qualification to establish them on their thrones. By the inculcating of that pernicious maxim to them, that they might dispense with the performance of their engagements, they have made them prove dangerous examples to their subjects; and 'tis this detestable principle that has been the source of all the intestine wars that have so long distracted most of the kingdoms of Europe.

For the exorbitant power with which flatterers have aim'd to compliment kings, has often occasion'd the ruin of themselves and their dominions. Happy is that prince, dear Isaac, who in the midst of the pomp and splendour of his court, preserves a heart

* The Persians, &c.

† History of Herodotus, lib. i pag. 69. translated by du

incapable of fraud and treachery, and who is so in love with honesty, that he protects it, and preaches it to his subjects by his own example. He is the darling of the people, his cotemporaries, and the admiration of posterity. They who are trusted with the education of princes, cannot sufficiently inspire them with candour and sincerity, since from hence all virtues are deriv'd. A famous Nazarene pontiff*, who form'd the infancy of a great prince†, wrote a book for the instruction of kings‡, that was worthy of being put into such a case of gold, as Alexander kept Homer's works in. He mark'd out lessons for all sovereign princes, and taught them the art of reigning over hearts, and of being more absolute by virtue and by justice, than by all the refin'd policy of the Italians. Of this nation there have been some authors whose dangerous works have been look'd upon as master-pieces. Machiavel, among others, has distinguish'd himself by his political writings. If I were a sovereign, I wou'd order all those writings of his to be burnt, that subject virtue to a precaution, to which they teach that every thing shou'd be sacrific'd. 'Tis ridiculous to attempt to justify the use of those books, by asserting that politics are a talent absolutely necessary for sovereigns. I have already shewn that true wisdom has no need of rules whereby to learn how to shake off the yoke of virtue and honour. A king may vanquish his enemies by his wisdom, without having recourse to fraud and perjury; he may keep his subjects in their duty, without reducing them to slavery. "There's no necessity," says a famous Nazarene author, of either art or learning for the exercise of tyranny." To what purpose then are all the books of extravagant politics, especially as there are works in being §, which teach us to do by virtue every thing that can be done by artifice.

* Archbishop of Cambray.

† Adventures of Telemachus.

‡ Duke of Burgundy.

§ Telemachus.

These, dear Isaac, are my sentiments of that policy so much boasted of by the Italians; and perhaps if the Genoese had conform'd to my notions, and instead of attempting to reduce the Corsicans to their lamentable condition, and thereby to drive them to a situation in which they cou'd not stir, if they had treated them in a more gentle manner, they wou'd have play'd a much better game. Be it as it will, they are now very much embarrass'd, and the lord Theodore gives them a vast deal of uneasiness. He has actually block'd up some of the towns of the island; he is master of the open country, and may perhaps in a little time undertake something considerable. We are assur'd that three ships have been seen on the coast of Corsica without any flag, and that they are laden with ammunition. 'Tis said they are succours which are arriv'd very fortunately for lord Theodore. If it be so, from whence did those ships come? Has Merlin the inchanter sent them from the fortunate island? No body knows any thing of the matter. But some people pretend that they came from the road of Barcelona. If that be the case, the comedy is like to draw to a conclusion, and we shall soon see the commencement of the fifth act. Tho' the unravelling of this piece is very pleasant, I don't believe that the Genoese half like it. Nevertheless we must wait a little while longer, before we can advance any thing that has the appearance of truth: If it be certain that some vessels are arriv'd with succours to king Theodore, the place from whence they sail'd will be a very great guide to the conjectures that may be made. But if this be unknown, people can only guess in the dark: Notwithstanding what some politicians say, who talk of this affair as if king Theodore had been so complaisant as to let them into his secret; this is all we can be sure of, that some may affirm with reason, that what turn soever the affair takes, his reign will be of a short duration*.

LETTER

* His reign has been short indeed; for upon the arrival of succours solicited by the Genoese from France, which undertook to

Fare thee well, dear Isaac, and live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXIV.

A description of Alexandria.— An historical account of the rise and fall of different kingdoms.— reflections thereon.— Julius Cæsar and Alexander considered only as illustrious robbers.— A farther account of the ruins of ancient Alexandria.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

[Alexandria. —

THE first letter which I wrote to thee from Egypt, must have given thee some general idea of the ruins of Alexandria; but I am now preparing to entertain thee with some particulars, having made myself fully acquainted with a great many things since I arrived here.

Alexandria, as it now stands, is the second town that was built out of the ruins of the antient city of that name. When the first was taken by the Arabians, those people who were accustom'd to live in the fields under tents, had no taste for towns, but despised them, They look'd upon palaces as prisons, and therefore pull'd down the finest and most stately, and employ'd the materials in building sorry houses, which were hardly better in appearance than wretched hovels; and they preserv'd the columns, and some other pieces of architecture for their mosques. Antient Alexandria was in a manner destroy'd, so that this once great city was deserted, and became a heap

to be the mediator betwixt the republic and the Corsicans (but is now the master of the island) Theodore quitted the island, after having made his party believe he shou'd soon return with powerful succours; but the only news we have had of him since, is, that he was committed prisoner to the castle of Gatea, by order of the court of Naples, but remov'd from thence on board a ship by command of a superior power; and what Merlin has done with him, no body knows.

of rubbish; for within its walls there were more ruins than inhabited houses. The Mahometan princes reduc'd its circumference to the people that remain'd in it. One of Saladin's successors made use of the ruins of the old city, which was abandon'd, for building the new one, which was not above ten miles in compass; and the walls of this city, with the hundred towers with which they are flank'd, were partly built out of the ruins of the palaces. It has a double circumference, and there are roads made at the foot of the towers, by which the soldiers that are in garrison may walk round it, secured from insults either from within or without, by the double wall. The towers which join both, are very large, and of a prodigious height; and each of 'em will easily contain above five hundred men, and has above a hundred rooms, all arch-roofed like those of certain castles which I have seen in my travels in Germany; so that a garrison of fifty thousand men might be put into the modern Alexandria, without incommoding the inhabitants. From hence thou may'st judge of the vast extent of the old city.

Some people who know no better, pretend that the walls which I have been describing to thee, were subsisting in the time of the Romans; but a man who will venture to assert this, must have no knowledge of history: For were it so, the extent of this city wou'd not have been the fifteenth part of what we know it must have been at that time: And unless a man be stark blind, he will easily be convinc'd by his own observation, that these walls cou'd not have been built either by the Greeks or the Romans; for they consist of a vast number of broken pieces of marble and pilars, with stones mingled here and there; and the walls of the new Alexandria are a mark of the ruins and spoils of the old city. But after all, dear Monceca, this modern Alexandria which I am describing to thee, is not the true city of Alexandria, as it subsists at this day; and there are scarce two hundred persons that inhabit the ruins which it contains. 'Tis so deserted, in short, that in the night

time, and till it is quite broad day, there is no passing it without running a very great risque of being robb'd, the most solitary forest being a much safer place than within its walls. The old buildings which subsisted there, having been partly destroy'd by time, and partly by wars, the people weary of dwelling among ruins were resolv'd to change to a more agreeable habitation; they settled themselves by degrees towards that place which is call'd the Port-neuf, or new harbour, exactly upon the sea-side: There they founded a third Alexandria, and quite abandon'd the second, wherein there are only a few mosques left standing, which they have preserv'd for the sake of their beauty. This new city is as much inferiour to the second Alexandria, as the second was to the antient and true one.

I find,* dear Monceca, 'tis the same with empires as it is with men: They rise to a certain degree, then sink insensibly, and at last totally run to ruin. Thus has the empire of the East pass'd from the Persians to the Greeks, from the Greeks to the Romans, and from the Romans to the Turks. How do we know to whom it will be transferr'd some ages hence? Perhaps the time of such revolution is not very distant. We observe the formation of some new empires to be almost as sudden as the rise of some men, and the fall and extinction of such empires as quick as that of wretched mortals. A man who forty or fifty years before the reign of Alexander, should have told the Macedonians that they wou'd have been masters of all Asia, and of a part of Europe, wou'd undoubtedly have been reckon'd a madman: For the thing happen'd so suddenly, that if we had not as much certainty of the fact as we have, one wou'd imagine the histories of it that are handed down to us to be only romances.

If the late king of Sweden had not lost that famous battle which preserv'd his rival on the throne, what countries might he not have been master of? What a sudden revolution might not have happen'd when the said king of Sweden, was a fugitive in Turkey

if a number of peasants pick'd up in haste, and mounted upon horses, for most part without either saddle or bridle, had not defeated the Danes, who strove to force their way into Sweden, which was then destitute of money and troops, without a king, and without hopes of succours? To what a pass was all that glory of Charles XII. reduc'd? He ran a risque of acting the same low part under the wing of the grand signior, as the pretender does under that of a sovereign pontiff.

If Lewis XIV. had won the battle of Hocstet, what wou'd have become of the Empire? I don't pretend to say what, but I fancy that at least it run as great a hazard, as it did when the Turks besieg'd Vienna. France was not in the most happy way, if some years after that, marshal Villars had not beat the allies at Denain. Almost all empires have had some dangerous shock at one time or another, tho' they have had a happy escape, but perhaps at another, time the disorder may prove mortal.

When the Huns, the Goths, the Vandals, and that swarm of people that came from the northern provinces, ravag'd the Gauls country and Italy, they overturn'd and destroy'd almost all the dominions they came to, and quite chang'd the face and form of Europe. What are become of the old Romans at this day? Perhaps there are none even at Rome itself, but the descendants of the Goths, Huns, and Gauls, and not a stain remaining of Roman blood.

I think, dear Monceca, that I have reason to say, that as soon as an empire is arriv'd to a certain point of elevation, it diminishes insensibly; and those which have acquir'd their grandeur with the greatest rapidity, sink likewise with the greater ease.

The Switzers have subsisted for a good number of ages, without having suffer'd any very material changes, because as they are careful to preserve their liberty and their country, they have not abandon'd themselves to the blind ambition of making conquests.

Venice and Genoa by grasping too much country, have reduc'd themselves to a sad condition. In the space of a century, the former lost two kingdoms*; and not many years ago it was robb'd of a flourishing province†: But perhaps it will enjoy more quiet, and not be subject to such accidents in the mediocrity to which it is now reduc'd. The latter is at a plunge, it has just lost all Corsica, and will soon be in as melancholy a situation as the republic of Lucca. That proud city of Genoa, which formerly made the emperors of Constantinople tremble‡, cannot defend itself now against a meer soldier of fortune||, with a rabble of sorry peasants under his command, half naked, and half starv'd.

A mediocrity is sometimes of as much service to the continuance and preservation of governments, as it is to the tranquility and felicity of the people. The Dutch have that wise maxim, not to be ambitious of making conquests. The government of the United Provinces reasons and thinks as sensibly as an honest man, the father of his family, who content to leave his children a patrimony well cultivated, does not desire to encrease it by incroaching on the fields and estates of his neighbours.

I shou'd be glad to hear any one good argument to justify the theft of great robbers; then I should believe Julius Cæsar and Alexander were honest men; but till then, I am tempted to consider them as a couple of illustrious highwaymen, who had several excellent qualities which were obscur'd by an invincible inclination to robbery. Why is it not as great a crime to rob a town, as to steal a cabbage out of a garden? Cicero attempted to prove that all sins were equally criminal; but he never presum'd to carry the paradox so far as to maintain, that it was not as sinful to rob a great deal, as to pilfer a little.

* Cyprus and Candia.

† The Morea.

‡ The Genoese were once masters of Pera, one of the principal suburbs of Constantinople.

|| The Baron de Newhoff.

I return to Alexandria. There are still to be seen within the inclosure of the walls that I have been describing to thee, certain fragments of architecture that are worthy the admiration of all good judges. Such is that stately colonnade in the middle of this inclosure, which consists of a row of pillars still standing, of an extraordinary bulk and height, that form'd an oval, in the middle of which was the most superb public square of Alexandria. The immense ruins near this colonnade, seem to denote that the finest palaces of this antient city fronted that stately piece of architecture every way, or those palaces perhaps advanc'd to those pillars on which the former walls rested, and so form'd the porticos under which the people walk'd.

Next to this famous monument, the greatest curiosities are the two needles, or obelisks, which are ascrib'd to Cleopatra; one is still standing, and the other thrown down, and half bury'd in the sand. The four sides of these needles are full of hieroglyphical figures, which give only a faint idea of what they represented to the view of the antients, to whom they were speaking characters.

The famous column of Pompey is another piece worthy of admiration. Of all the splendid antiquities of Alexandria and its neighbourhood, there scarce remain any ruins so entire as this column. It has very beautiful proportions, and the nicest eye can find no defect in it; it consists of three pieces, of which the chapiter makes one, the shaft and three feet of the base form the second, and the rest of the base the third. 'Tis eighty feet between the base and the chapiter, and a hundred and ten feet in height; so that I take it to be the highest and the biggest in the world.

The antient monuments of which I have been treating, dear Monceca, must one day have the same fate as the many others that have preceded them; they will be demolish'd and overthrown. They have already receiv'd some shocks by time, and 'tis quite unknown now by whom they were set up. The

names of Pompey and Cleopatra, which are fix'd to these pillars, are not, according to all appearance, the names of those who erected them; and why those names are given to them, there's no certainty. Temples, palaces, triumphal arches, do not immortalise either sovereigns or private persons. 'Tis great actions or writings that are sure to make us live for ever in the memory of man *. How many monuments have there not been destroy'd since Alcibiades, Themistocles, Miltiades, and those other illustrious Greeks whom the fame of their actions has transmitted to the latest posterity! How many temples and palaces have been overturn'd since the death of Homer! But that illustrious genius still lives amongst us, and he is the darling of all nations now, as he was formerly of the Greeks. They are only the meaner sort, who, for want of talents of their own to pierce thro' the obscure night of time, endeavour to outstretch it by immense piles of stones and marble.

Fare thee well, dear Monceca, live contented and happy, and take great care of thy self.

* Exegi monumentum ære perennius
Regali situ pyramidum altius; &c.

Hor. Ode xxx. lib. iii.

Thus translated by Mr. C R E E C H.

'Tis finish'd; I have rais'd a monument
More strong than brass, and of a vast extent;
Higher than Egypt's stately pyramid,
That costly monument of kingly pride,
As high as heav'n the top, as earth the basis wide:
Which eating showers, nor north wind's feeble blasts,
Nor whirling time, nor flight of years can waste:
While Horace shall not die, his song shall save
The greatest portion from the greedy grave:
Still fresh I'll grow, still green in future praise,
Till time is lost, and Rome itself decays:
Till the chief priest and silent maid no more
Ascend the capitol, and Jove adore.

LETTER

LETTER LXXV.

A hot dispute between two Parisian Jansenists and a young abbe, relating to father Girard and Miss Cadriere.—Prevented from coming to extremities by two officers present; one of whom endeavours to clear up the affair by a long harangue, not very much to the satisfaction of either party.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Lyons.——

I Am arrived at Lyons, from whence I propose to set out as soon as I can for Montpellier, where I shall make but a very short stay, because I am in great haste to go to Spain. The situation I am in, dear Monceca, enables me to judge for myself of the accounts thou hast given me of the manners and customs of the French. I find thy reflections just, and the hints I have had from thy letters are of infinite service to me; I have some foretaste of many things that I see and examine very sedately, which wou'd surprize and astonish me, if I was not prepossess'd.

At my quarters there are two Parisian Jansenists, banished to this city by a Lettre de Cachet; there's nothing so pleasant as to hear them dispute with a young abbe, who hopes to get a benefice by the interests of the Jesuits. It must be own'd that he richly deserves the present they give him reason to expect, and that he battles it for the party wherever he comes with infinite courage. When he cannot defend himself by arguments, he has recourse to invectives; and very often, if we did not check his rage and impetuosity, he wou'd take one of those Jansenists by the collar, and so their disputes wou'd be decided by dint of fist.

Two or three days ago, a priest, who is a bitter enemy to the Jesuits, came and din'd at our quarters: "I have an account," said he, "from Dole that father Girard has wrought several miracles since his death; but if it be true, there's not a fellow that's broke upon the

the wheel or hang'd, but may work miracles too; the gibbets and gallows of Montfaucon will make special catacombs; and reliques will become dog-cheap. You are a fool," says the young Abbe to this Jansenist Priest, and to do you justice you ought to be tuck'd up by the neck to those gibbets you talk of, in company with father Nicholas, la Cadriere, and all her knavish family. I'll call my landlady, and tell her that I am resolv'd to leave her house, if she hereafter entertains persons that are excommunicated ipso facto, and the adherents of such a heretic as the impostor Paris. Methinks, little gentleman," said the Jansenist, "you give yourself mighty airs. No more than I ought to do," reply'd my little Abbe, "and I swear to you by my band, and the Cassoc an my back, that if you ever think fit to take up the cudgels, and to declaim against worthy men wherever I am, I'll teach you to hold your prating. You!" reply'd the Jansenist, "shall such a snotty-nose prig as you make me hold my tongue, when the respect I owe to my prince can't silence me! By G—d I shou'd be glad to see how you wou'd go about it. The thing is very easy," said the Abbe, "and if you say but a word more, I'll immediately stop your mouth by letting a plate fly at your head! What the Devil!" reply'd the Jansenist, "a plate at my head! a plate at the head of a batchelor of the Sorbonne, thou little excrement of Loyola! I'll make you to know who you talk to." At these words the Jansenist was so provok'd, that he snatch'd a bottle, and if the two officers, who laugh'd ready to burst themselves to see this ecclesiastical challenge, had not been so good-natur'd as to check the fury of the two antagonists, I shou'd have been a quiet spectator of a most bloody skirmish.

After these two champions were parted, "Gentlemen, said the officers, you don't observe the rules of the military art in your squabbles; before people proceed to violence, they shou'd by a manifesto justify their motives for declaring war.

This

war. This is the practice of sovereigns : As for you, sir, you are an enemy to father Girard and the Jesuits ; tell us your reasons for it, and then the other gentleman will please to acquaint us with his. And what wou'd you have me say," reply'd the Jansenist, " are you ignorant of what all the world knows ? Who can help inveighing against a man that has made religion a cloak for his debauchery, who has abused his character as confessor, to debauch his penitent, and who, in short, by the help of the devil, got the ascendant over her to such a degree, that he cou'd obtain her favours as often as he pleas'd, and she had not the power to deny him."

The Abbé who was quite a-gog to answer his antagonist, had not patience to let him empty his quiver of reproaches. " Father Girard," said he, " is innocent in the sight of all those who don't suffer themselves to be influenc'd by ill-will and prejudice. He was the innocent victim of a conspiracy form'd between father Nicholas, father Cadiere, and his sister. The Jansenists intended to give a mortal blow to an illustrious society, by destroying one of its principal members. They did not matter how much they dishonour'd religion, provided the ycou'd crush their enemies."

" These then, Gentlemen," said one of the officers, are all the arguments that both of you have to produce. Alas ! I'll prove to each of you, that you are both in the wrong to dispute so eagerly upon suppositions that are equally false. I'll first answer your reasons," continu'd the officer, addressing himself to the Jansenist, " you say that father Girard, abusing his character, made his penitent a demoniac and debauch'd her : I shall prove one of these two things to you ; either, that father Girard did not seduce la Cadiere ; or that she gave her hearty consent.

" If the advocates who pleaded for father Girard had been allow'd to plead from the book of natural reason, and had not been oblig'd to adopt as an article of faith a ridiculous notion, which has no other foundation and reality than the writings of certain monks,

monks, and the preachments of some country curates, they wou'd have absolutely deny'd the possibility of the existence of magicians, and that any witchcraft cou'd determine the will. Suppose that a philosopher accustom'd to make use of his reason, was pleading the cause of father Girard in the court of the parliament of Provence, is it possible, he would say, that a man who has liv'd fifty years in reputation for his virtue, should be accused of the most heinous crimes, and but one proof produc'd of it contrary to all the notions of evidence? Then the philosopher calling sound philosophy to his aid, let us see, says he, Gentlemen if it was possible for father Girard to direct the will of la Cadiere, to put her into trances, to give her marks in her body, to make her sweat blood thro' her pores, and to cause crowns of thorns to sprout from her head, he absent all the while, and acting only by the aid of philtres.

" 'Tis certain that several liquors are capable of producing extraordinary effects in us, and of quite changing our habits. The remedies that are in medicines, the subtle poisons, whose effects are as quick as that of a dagger stuck into the heart, are convincing proofs of the power which certain philtres have to act upon our senses. But is it not absurd to maintain, that they produce effects contrary to nature, and alter the very essence of things? Is it not ridiculous to say, that a draught has the power to make wood and thorns grow, and sprout forth from the brain of a person, and then to shrink back into the same brain as a snail into its shell? To this must be referr'd that certain axiom receiv'd by all philosophers, a thing cannot communicate what it has not itself. Now how can a liquor produce wood, and form la Cadiere's crown? For when she was in that famous trance wherein that miraculous crown appear'd, 'tis agreed that father Girard was absent: It must be therefore own'd that philtres not being able to produce those thorns, and father Girard, then absent, not being able to give them, la Cadiere herself must have plac'd them

them in her head-dress. When she had shewn herself in her pretended trances, she went at least halves with father Girard, in imposing upon the public, and I defy any one that makes use of his reason to think otherwise.

“ ’Tis extremely ridiculous to presume to assert that father Girard, as powerful as God himself, was able to determine the will of la Cadiere by a superior motion, in such a manner as that it must necessarily be forc’d to yield to the designs of her confessor. All the love-potions in the world cannot reduce and determine the will of a fix’d point. Matter can only act upon matter. How then can a liquid draught act directly upon the will, to produce a certain and determinate effect ? otherwise it only operates by the sensations and motions which it produces on the body. Thus by philtres the blood may be heated, the spirits may be dispos’d to love, and motives of concupiscence may be rais’d, but they who take them are not thereby determin’d to one particular object more than to another.

“ The will remains free ; and by disposing the heart to a tender passion, an unknown person may as easily be the better for it as a lover. The favours which the agitation of the spirits, and the desires of concupiscence have render’d easy to obtain, are absolutely dispos’d of by whimsy and the will. La Cadiere might therefore as well have made any other person happy : All the philtres of father Girard did not force her to determine herself in his favour, much less to give such a grace to the frauds and miracles which, I have prov’d, cou’d only be operated by the study’d craft of this pretended faintefs.

“ You must therefore own, Messieurs Janfenists, either that the trances, the raptures, and miracles of la Cadiere, have been only invented for the purpose, and to ruin that Jesuit, or that la Cadiere was partner with him in all his impostures : I give you the choice of these ; but which way soever you decide it, you must own that the female saint, for whom you are so zealous,

zealous, deserves infinite contempt instead of your esteem.

"Now I come to you, Monsieur l'Abbe," continu'd the officer, "and I will prove to you, that such a man as you, whose state demands a strict morality, ought not to be an advocate for father Girard. You will readily grant that father Girard was no fool; he was a Jesuit, and a Jesuit for whom his order had an esteem. After what has been said, no person can be at a loss to know his temper and principles. I ask you then, sir, if you believe that a man who is not very glad to impose upon the public, by affecting to be the dupe himself, cou'd give into all the extravagances of la Cadiere, and twenty or thirty other pious ladies, most of whom were at least without having taken love-potions, as much heated as la Cadiere? The noted Batarel, the principal and the most illustrious of this honest Jesuit's female saints, cool'd her flames sometimes by amorous kisses; which is a fact he himself has own'd*. But alas! sir, is that the behaviour of a chaste, prudent priest, who is zealous for the cause of his religion? Own therefore, that if father Girard was neither a magician, nor guilty of spiritual incest, he was at least a great knave, and a consummate hypocrite. Don't believe that while I accuse him, I am for justifying his adversary father Nicholas; for he was at least as guilty as the other, and not near so scrupulous. The Jesuit preserv'd a certain decency; as he was examining a wound under the left breast, he had an excuse ready if he had taken a fancy to have kiss'd it, being politic in all his ways, the austere

* Being interrogated, if he did not kiss miss Batarel at Cadiere's house? he answered, That as he went to take his leave of Cadiere, the night before he departed for Oulioulie, Batarel being there at the same time, Batarel desir'd him to step aside for one moment into a chamber, on pretence of speaking to him in private; and that the said Batarel shutting the chamber-door on a sudden, embrac'd the respondent without saying a word to him; upon which he flung himself immediately out of her arms. General collection of the pieces relating to the process between miss Cadiere, &c. Interrogat, 149. tom. v. p. 40.

and

and pious look never abandon'd him*. But the Carmelite acted like a Carmelite ; he never once minc'd the matter and without standing upon trifles, he used the privileges of his order †.

" You must own therefore, M. l'Abbé, that your zeal for father Girard is extravagant ; and to tell you frankly my mind, a man must be very fond of defending strange paradoxes, who offers to justify him. The public cries out against the arret of the parliament of Provence, by which those three persons were acquitted ; but since it did not punish them all three alike, I think it cou'd not do better."

How just soever this officer's arguments appear'd the little Abbé and the Jansenists did not seem very well pleas'd ; however, they each went his way, knitting their brows at one another most terribly.

The post is just going off, and I conclude my letter.

Fare thee well, dear Monceca, live content and happy.

* Being interrogated, if he never kiss'd that wound ? He answer'd, No ; but that, if he had thought it proper to kiss the ulcer, he shou'd have only follow'd the example of the saints, and have done it either from a principle of religion, or for mortification Collect. Tom. v. p. 34.

† 'Tis prov'd in several parts of the process, that father Nicholas had a strong inclination to debauch la Cadiere, and that they went to bed in the country in the same chamber. Collect. Tom. v. p. 103.

L E T T E R LXXVI.

The method used by the priests to exorcise demoniac

—A conversation between the devil Arfaxa and monk.—The adoration paid to reliques, ridiculed

—A story of a cow possess'd with a devil; and the infernal spirit exorcis'd by St. Martin.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris. —

I Receiv'd thy letter from Lyons; the story of the Jansenist and the little Abbe made me very merry. The officer who endeavour'd to reconcile them, seem'd to me to be a man of good sense, and I am inclin'd to believe that he has a just notion of the affair of the Jesuit Girard. I was always convinc'd in my own mind that there was knavery, craft, and imposture on both sides. Cadriere's pretending to be bewitch'd plainly shews the ridicule of one part of her depositions; yet how absurd soever it was to accuse her of being bewitch'd, it was absolutely necessary; for otherwise father Girard cou'd not have been attack'd and Cadriere being a partner in his crimes, would have been liable to punishment: she would therefore have kept silence; but as soon as a verdict was given that she was determin'd by a superior power, she would be no longer guilty, and the whole would be chargeable upon the devil and the conjurers.

The Nazarenes have such a strong faith in witchcraft, sorcery, and the like, that there is nothing so absurd but they are by this means made to believe. Imposture becomes a miracle, and is thought worthy of being regarded as an effect of the immediate will of the Deity, the moment that such imposture is covered with the veil of obsession and possession. There's nothing so pleasant as the dialogues which some friars have with the demoniacs whom they exorcise. They enter into a thousand little familiarities with the devil. They crack jokes upon one another; and one would be apt to take Belzebub for a Merry-Andrew, and Satan for an amiable complaisant Petit-Maitre. The

following

following are the original terms of one of those infernal conversations: I fancy they may be an amusement to thee. 'Tis a monk that speaks.

"The sister Bonaventure being possess'd by a devil call'd Arfaxa, came to me to be confess'd. Saying, she wou'd go to no body else; and it must be observ'd, that this devil was always fond to talk to me*."

Thou perceiv'st, dear Brito, that the Nazarene monks know all the devils by their names and surnames, and that the latter have a kindness for the friars, and are very eager for an opportunity to converse with them. I must own to thee, that I should be very apt to think that there's an actual sympathy between the monks and the devils, tho' I fancy the latter are not near so malicious: As thou wilt perceive by the trick which this same friar play'd the devil Arfaxa. His own words are these:

"I fell down upon my knees before the devil, telling him that my design was to come and confound my pride, by that of the devils, and to learn humility of them, in spite of their teeth. This devil was enrag'd to see me in this state, and told me, that he had received a command to prevent me. And as I was continuing to make my obeisance, he was resolv'd to take advantage of it, and said to me, "thou adorest me;" I reply'd, "thou art too infamous, villain. I consider thee as the creature of my God, and the object of his wrath; therefore I am for submitting to thee, because thou dost not deserve it; and instantly I will come and kiss thy feet. The devil surpriz'd at this motion, hinder'd me." What dost thou think, dear Brito, of all these tricks? A monk must be very crafty and very malignant, if he has the secret to make a fool of the devil, and to put him into a rage. Who wou'd have said to Arfaxa, that the impatience he had to converse with

* The collection of what pass'd at the exorcising of certain demons of the town of Louviers, by the reverend father Gaufre, printed at Paris with permission, Anno. 1643. p 30. and 31.

this friar wou'd subject him to be banter'd and jeer'd. Yet that is not all the scene; the conclusion of which is much more mortifying to the devil, and more for the honour of the monk. "Upon this, continues he I conjur'd this devil to shew me as far as was possible the will of God, either that I should kiss his feet, or he kiss mine." The answer he made me was, "thou know'st what impulse thou hast from God; follow it."

This answer savours as much of the Norman as of the devil; Arfaxa was not a fool; he was afraid to be the cause of his enemy's humiliation, and by that means to open the gates of heaven to him. Nor did he care on the other hand to kiss the feet of a friar, who made such scurvy sport with a devil that had shewn such a friendship for him. He therefore left the question undecided, believing that the monk perhaps wou'd not determine himself; but he had cunning enough to outwit Arfaxa. He fell at his feet and kiss'd them; at which the devil was heartily enrag'd; "Afterwards, says this Friar, commanded him, by the reliques of father Bernard to kiss mine; which he did with great readiness."

This, dear Brito, is sheer malice to perfection and sure I am, that Arfaxa little thought that the reliques of father Bernard wou'd serve him such a slippery trick.

I know not whether thou took'st notice of the devils ready obedience, as soon as mention was made to him of St. Bernard's skeleton: The virtue of it must be very particular, since 'tis capable of influencing the infernal spirits. This history seems to confirm the stories that are told of the charms perform'd by the witches of old time; Horace speaks of one Canidia, who in the composition of her philtre made use of bones which she dug out of church yards. The Nazarenes fancy that in some bones there is a great virtue. The Mahometans, especially the Persians, have the same notion. But in my opinion, people must be very fond of giving an air of mystery and religion to the most common things, by

supposing a piece of earth to be sacred, and, as one may say, a part of the Deity.

What the Nazarenes call reliques, is only a simple portion of matter, of a piece with all the rest, and which has no more virtue, than the least and most contemptible part of it. For if the matter of which a bone is form'd, had qualities superior to the powers of common matter, and partook of the divine power, it cou'd never lose its advantages. Now there is nothing so easy as to bring the head of a saint, to form in process of time a part of the body of a highway-man: Then the matter which compos'd the head of the saint will have certainly lost its divine virtue. And 'tis as ridiculous to assert that a thing can lose its internal qualities and faculties by the different form that is given to it, as it is to say, that a piece of marble becomes cold because it is square. But 'tis still more difficult to comprehend, how those bones can lose their attributes, because, being in some respect divine, they must be the less subject to alteration. Suppose that a beast should eat the head of a saint and that this beast, kill'd by a gipsy or a vagabond, should serve him, after being salted, for his diet six months, 'tis certain that several of the parts of the matter that form'd the head of the saint will be diffus'd in the members of the gipsy. I demand, whether they will then have the virtue to work miracles, and to sanctify the offending and unclean parts to which they will be join'd. If it shou'd be answer'd, that they have no longer any power, I deny with good reason that they ever cou'd have any; because 'tis not the different configuration that gives the internal qualities to matter; a loadstone having the same attraction of iron, be it round or square. Perhaps it will be said, that God permits that those bones shou'd operate while they are bones, but not when they are pulveriz'd. If so, I challenge the most zealous Nazarenes to shew me in the books of their chief doctors *, where God has reveal'd that he has granted

* The apostles.

a power to bones to act as strongly as the Deity; and tho' I am a Jew, I am ready in that case to submit implicitly to their opinion; but I have no fear that they will be able to convince me: For there's not a word said of bones in the fundamental books of the religion.

Tho' I make this public declaration against the superstition of reliques, I don't approve of the extraordinary contempt which certain people affect to the precious remains of persons that have rendered themselves venerable by their piety and good behaviour, during the whole course of their lives. What is that man who does not respect the tomb of his ancestors, or that durst prophane their ashes? virtuous men are the fathers of their country, which is oblig'd to them for the knowledge of good, and for the means of attaining to it. Let the Nazarenes honour the tombs of some of their ancestors as much as they will, I approve of their maxims. But if they deify their ashes and their reliques; if they ascribe as much power to them as to God himself; if with the censers in their hands, like to the pagans, they cense splinters of bone and shreds of stuff upon altars; I then condemn their extravagant zeal, and think their notion altogether ridiculous: So that I am almost byass'd in favour of their adversaries, who are in the other extrem too careless and indifferent as to the melancholy remains of illustrious men, the sight of which may be a very great motive to virtue. Statues are erected every day to great monarchs, and to illustrious generals, in order to animate their equals, to deserve such monuments by eminent actions. Relics that are preserv'd carefully, and respected, are as good as stately mausoleums and tombs for exciting people to virtue.

Therefore, dear Brito, I don't condemn the Nazarenes, for the care they take in preserving certain bones: But what I blame them for, is the worship they pay to 'em, and the abuse of 'em by the monks, like the fryar I told thee of just now, a confitent liar, who abusing the ashes of his father Bernard,

com-

commanded the devils by the power of a skeleton.

The thing which has brought reliques into contempt, is their being bought and sold like wares, for more or less money, according to the name of the makers. Some of the sovereign pontiffs have sold a great number of 'em very cheap, and others have kept them up to a very extravagant rate; they have search'd for them in all places where they thought they could find them; and when the true ones have fail'd, they have forg'd a great number of false ones, like to certain avaricious sovereigns, who after having drain'd their subjects of all their gold, give them bits of paper in exchange for it of an imaginary value. The power which is ascrib'd to reliques of working miracles of all kinds, proceeds from the same source, and 'tis covetousness that gives them those surprizing virtues. The sovereign pontiffs have acted just like the mountebanks, who for the better sale of their balsam, ascribe all manner of virtues to it. Reliques, demoniacs, and indulgences, are three inexhaustible mines, which bring in more profit to the friars, than Peru and Brasil do to the Spaniards and Portuguese. All the business is to set them off cleverly. There are certain Nazarene friars that know how to extract the quintessence of these ecclesiastic treasures; they exorcise even the brute beasts, tho' there's not a Nazarene so silly as to believe their being possess'd with a devil. Thou must not think this extraordinary; for the devils take a trip sometimes into the bodies of animals, when they can't find better employment. I have read in a book *, That the devil once possess'd a cow, and that he sometimes cut capers in her belly, and sometimes on her back. " One Martin, says the author, seeing what a sad plight the poor beast was in, order'd the devil to let her alone, and depart. The cow was so sensible of this Martin's kindness to her, that she came politely to pay him her homage

* See the Legend of St. Martin.

fell on her knees, and lowed three times to shew her gratitude.'

As ridiculous as this tale appears, there are many much more so which the Nazarene people firmly believe to be true; they are told very gravely that stories of this kind are authentic, and generally acknowledg'd for facts; and they are assur'd of this so often that they really believe it.

O sacred hunger of pernicious gold!

What bands of faith can impious lucre hold*.

Farewell, dear Brito, and live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXVII.

The origin of Cairo, the metropolis of Egypt.—Description of its antiquities, mosques and tombs.—A remarkable story concerning the tomb of Doctor Chafai.—The behaviour of Cambyfes to the Egyptian God Apis.—The Egyptians much given to superstition—People of all countries and religions too much tinctured with superstition.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo—

TIS now near a month that I arriv'd at Cario, but one thing or another has prevented me from writing to thee sooner. This city owes its foundation to one Giaucher, vizier to the caliph Meezledin, who conquer'd Egypt. This vizier caus'd a thick high wall to be built round a plain in which his whole army lay encamp'd. His master, the caliph, a mortal enemy to towns, as are most of the Arabs, thinking this a more pleasant residence than Alexandria, caus'd his tents to be set up there; but by degrees some houses were built in that inclosure. In process of time it was full of palaces and public structures, and at last it grew to be a magnificent city, which was insensibly enrich'd with the

*——— Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,
Auri sacra fames!

Airg' Æn. lib. iii.
ruins

ruins of the town of Maſr, which its citizens abandon'd in order to come and dwell in this new place. Giauer, in memory of his conqueſt, had given this city the name of El Cahera, which, as thou know'ſt, is the Arabic word for Victorious : And from hence ſome merchants of Florence and Venice, who were the firſt Nazarene merchants that were allow'd to ſettle in this city, form'd the name el Cairo, to which they added the epithet Grand, to denote the extent and beauty of it*.

That, dear Monceca, was the true origin of Cairo ; and all other accounts of it given by hiſtorians, are contradictory to truth and the beſt Arabian hiſtorians. This is now the metropolis of Egypt, and the ſeat of the Baſha who commands that province. The porte always truſts one of the principal men among the Turks with this important poſt ; and he lives in a caſtle, or ſort of citadel very poorly fortify'd if compared to the ſtrong towns of the Nazarenes. This citadel was built about ſeven hundred years ago, by Saladin.

In Cairo there are ſeveral pieces of antiquity which were brought thither in the time of the caliphs, either from Alexandria, or from upper and lower Egypt. There are alſo the ruins of ſeveral old palaces, built and inhabited by the ſovereigns of Egypt, and by the chief lords of their courts. The gildings of the ceilings which have eſcap'd the inclemencies of the weather, ſtill look as freſh as if the workman had but juſt finiſh'd them. The mosques of this city are very beautiful, but they don't come near to thoſe of Conſtantinople. That of Aſhur, which is the moſt magnificent, is far inferiour to the ſeven chief mosques of the imperial city. They are built here as in other places, cover'd with domes, and adorn'd with ſeveral minarets or ſteeples †.

* See Mr. Mallet's account of Egypt. Part I.

† They are towers that ſerve for ſteeples. The Turks call the people to prayers regularly five times a day.

There

There are about Cairo several tombs of the Mahometan doctors or fantons, which are very much frequented by a great number of persons, who pay extraordinary devotion to them. One of the principal tombs is that of the famous Dr. Chafai; 'tis almost as good an annuity to certain fantons and dervishes that take care to keep it in repair, as the chine or rump-bone of St. Francis is to his disciples the Franciscans. The Turkish monks have as much zeal for this saint, as the Nazarene monks have for theirs. The boldest convulsionary Jansenist cou'd not have fallen upon a more crafty method than they did to secure Chafai to themselves.

A sovereign of Egypt, who was caliph of Babylon, and kept his court there, was desirous to have the body of this famous Chafai carry'd to all the places where he chose to reside; he wrote to the governour of Egypt to cause it to be taken out of the ground, and to send it to him in a magnificent coffin. The governour was very sorry for this order, because, knowing what a profound veneration all the people had for this pretended saint, he dreaded an insurrection; and in order to avoid the sad consequences which commonly attend popular risings, he communicated the order which he had received to the dervishes, whom he exhorted to submit to the commands of their prince, and recommended it to them to dispose the populace to consent to the removal of the saint. I will go to-morrow, said he to them, and perform the Caliph's command; do you therefore be ready with all necessaries. The Turkish monks were not astonish'd at the summons; they resolv'd to act to some purpose, and to oppose the orders of the sovereign, but in such a manner as shou'd not make him their enemy. To effect this with ease, they resolv'd to cover their fraud with a miracle, and to secure heaven on their side. That's the grand secret to attain to the end of the most difficult enterprizes. They work'd all night to finish their project, and after having open'd the saint's tomb, they put combustible matter round the corpse, mix'd with some phosphoruses, which

which wou'd take fire as soon as they took air. After they had prepar'd every thing, they very calmly waited for the governor, who, on pretence of doing the more honour to the saint, repair'd to his tomb with a retinue of ten thousand men; tho' all this apparatus and pomp was only to keep the people from rising up in arms. As soon as he was arriv'd, the workmen began to open the ground. When they came to the place where the corpse lay, and began to give air to the phosphoruses, the combustible matters took fire and such a hot bright flame burst out of the tomb that they who dug there were depriv'd for some moments of their sight: They were the first that cry'd out a Miracle; the populace did the same; and then the priests proclaim'd that it was not the saint's will to quit the place of his retirement. The imagination of the Egyptians, which is ripe for prodigies, greedily catch'd at this; and the tomb was instantly cover'd up again, without presuming to go any farther to work. The governor, like a good politician, and as good a courtier, artfully took the advantage of this pretended miracle to satisfy the people, without slighting the orders of his master, to whom he sent an account of this prodigy which above ten thousand spectators cou'd certify. The Caliph, when he heard that the saint was well, and did not care to quit his lodging, consented to let him lie in his old tomb, where he still continues, and where the Mahomedan devotees go in crouds to pray*.

Thou must own, dear Monceca, that this prank tallies exactly with the tricks that are play'd by the Naxarene monks: Go where we will, we shall find that superstition feeds the avarice of certain men who drive a scandalous trade with their religion, and disgrace themselves in the opinion of men of sense, to whom their knavery is soon known.

The Egyptians are even more superstitious than the Turks, and in this respect the Spaniards are scarce a match for them. It seems as if in all times this

* Mallet's Account of Egypt, Part II.

country had been the centre of ridiculous ceremonies, and as if it chose to be a lesson to other nations, to shew them to what a degree of error the human understanding is liable. The antient Egyptians ador'd the vilest and most contemptible of animals, crocodiles, and ichneumons; nay they deify'd plants; "O happy nation, said Juvenal, on purpose to banter that stupid people, which sees their Gods grow in their very gardens†." I can't imagine, dear Monceca, how 'twas possible for a polite people, acquainted as they were with the sciences, and endow'd with a genius, to have such blind ideas as they had of the Deity. That the barbarous savage nations shou'd fall into certain errors, does not near so much surprize me: A man who is capable of eating his fellow-creature with as good an appetite as he wou'd devour a chicken, may fall into the greatest of errors; and no wonder: But that a people among whom the arts and sciences flourish, who know and practise the most excellent laws of morality, shou'd have such extravagant ideas as to deify a calf, and carefully to nourish it in a temple, is what I cannot for my life comprehend. For how can it be imagin'd that a man who makes use of his reason, who raises his genius to such a pitch as to measure the course of the stars, and to foresee and foretell eclipses by an exact calculation, can really think that a God has a beginning and an end, and that he comes in the form of a calf to chew the cud, and to browse for the space of twelve or fourteen years? The Greeks and Persians, with all their stupidity, were not near so blind as this comes to.

Cambyfes being at Memphis, after he had conquer'd Egypt, and not knowing the cause of certain rejoicings that the people were then making, enquir'd into the reason, and was very much surprized to hear that they were celebrating the festival of the God Apis who, after a long space of time, was now come to shew himself in public. Upon this he sent for the

† O Sanctas gentes, quibus nascuntur in hortis
Numina! —————

Juv. Sat. xv. v. 10.

priest

priests, and said to them by way of banter, that, if there was any Deity who was so gracious as to demean himself to the Egyptians, 'twas a wonder he should conceal himself from the king; and therefore he bid them bring their God Apis to him. But how great was the surprize of Cambyfes, when the priests brought a calf to him! Being exasperated to the last degree, he drew his dagger, and run it into the leg of their God, who thereupon died of the wound. "Ye poltroons, said he to the priests, are the Gods then compos'd of blood and flesh, and do they feel the pricks of a sword? Really such a God is fit for the Egyptians. But I will make you to know that you shall get nothing by abusing us, and putting a trick upon us*."

I am charm'd, dear Monceca, with the noble indignation of Cambyfes, and am pleas'd to find a pagan, notwithstanding his idolatry, and without any other light but reason, sensible that the Deity could not be compos'd either of flesh or blood. The wretched priests who serv'd the calf Apis, were as fully convinc'd as this monarch, of the vileness of their pretended Deity, whom they saw decaying every day with their own eyes; but they found their advantage by imposing on the credulity of the people.

Mankind has been in all ages the same: Some have been glad to be deceived, and others to profit by the weakness of their brethren. To this was owing the credit of Apis, and of the Egyptian priests, that of the oracles of Delphos, and of the Pagan Greek, and Roman pontiffs, and in short of a multitude of Nazarene chimeras, and of the monks that invented them. Errors, instead of being destroy'd by time, only alter their shape and assume a new form. In all ages there have arose men of eminence for their merit and learning, who were for opposing the torrent, and combating superstition: But they are commonly the victims of their zeal, and are generally oppress'd by those from whom they endeavour

* Herodotus, lib. i. p. 45. Translated by M. du Ryer.

to pull off the mask. In all religions the vulgar favour those most that tell them the most chimeras and the most fables. Thou thyself knowest how hard it was for our brethren the Jews at Constantinople to relish thy lessons, because thou seemed'st to disapprove of certain traditions which thou thought'st contrary to the scriptures, and capable of hurting the mind. The Mahometants don't much care for the Arabian doctors, because they are enemies to miracles and superstition. The works of Macrifi, a famous author, are not so much esteem'd as those of several Mollas and Imans, which are full of ridiculous fables. The Turks accuse that author of want of religion, because he has related but very few miracles, and even confuted several. They cannot bear that he shou'd charge it as a folly, to believe that the dead return from the other world. Savonarola, a Dominican friar, smarted severely for having too publicly condemn'd the frauds of the court of Rome, and those of his brethren. Alexander VI. sovereign pontiff, found out the way to check his troublesome remonstrances, and Savonarola was hang'd at Florence, with two of his companions. The blindness of some people is so gross, and the malice of others so black, that tis almost impossible to open the eyes of the one, and to mend the hearts of the other.

Farewell, dear Monceca, prosper in thy undertakings, and live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXVIII.

The young monks, &c. trained up to cavalling and disputing.—Philosophy in no repute in France till the time of Gassendi and Descartes.----Studying methodically the surest way of arriving at perfection. Remarks on Aristotle's philosophical works.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris—

SOME days ago I sent thee an account, dear Isaac of a dispute that happened between the Jansenists and Molinists, about the publication of a book called

the Breviary : This affair is now entirely ended, for the priests who would not receive it, have submitted, and all is hush'd ; but it cannot hold so long, and new disputes will soon arise. The turbulent temper of the Nazarene priests cannot permit them to lie quiet, for to live without caballing, is to the monks a terrible punishment. Bawling and disputing with one another is their main exercise, which, painful as it is, they have schools where they learn it, and masters who teach them this kind of fencing.

A young monk is train'd up at Paris just as a gladiator's apprentice was in antient Rome. His regents in philosophy and theology teach him the subterfuges of the Disparates necessary to evade the truth ; and by the aid of a syllogism he exercises himself in the quest of methods, to obscure things that are the plainest in the world. He arms himself with a multitude of distinctions, divisions, and subdivisions, by the help of which he becomes invincible, or at least fearless of being oblig'd to submit to reason and the light of nature. As soon as he has acquired this talent, he begins to enter into the Circus, where he exercises it in the particular assemblies of his order ; and finally when he is perfect master of the art of attacking reason, he rambles like another knight-errant in pursuit of adventures, and is a constant attendant at the several theses that are maintain'd, which is a name they give to certain public disputations that are held upon such and such days in the convents of the monks. Aristotle, Scotus, and some other school-philosophers have more credit in these assemblies than reason has ; and tis in vain for it to demonstrate the evidence of any one point, if it is not approv'd by Aristotle, or if it be condemned by St. Thomas.

Good sense is a fool that must be silent, and not attempt to combat the opinion of those philosophers, to whom certain monks are attach'd.

In these assemblies, and at these disputes, he that has the best lungs has always the better of the argument and reason on his side.

Thou wouldst be astonish'd dear Isaac, if thou wast to be at these disputations, and to see with what front these pretended philosophers deny the most evident points: Their distinctions wou'd quite tire out thy patience. I am not at all surprized if heretofore philosophy was generally condemn'd in France. What could people of sense think of all that jumble of imaginary beings, second intentions, and many other impertinences, which were for a long time the exercise of all the philosophers? In order to destroy prejudices, there was an absolute necessity for two great men* to take up the Ferula, to correct all the pretended scholars of their age, and to force them to open their eyes, and to see the error in which they were plung'd. But notwithstanding that they perceiv'd their mistake, the generality of them were too self-conceited to follow the lamp of truth.

As for the prejudices of certain monks that were ignorant and prepossessed, it did not much surprise me; but I cou'd not comprehend how men of genius and penetration could be so far blinded as to think that Aristotle was given to mankind as a terrestrial deity, to instruct them in all the secrets of the celestial one, and that the latter had reveal'd to the former all his operations and designs. Is it possible that such a learned man as Averroes cou'd entertain, and write such extravagant notions †? If Aristotle be the supreme truth, 'tis needless for men to apply hereafter to the discovery of the nature of things; they can learn nothing more that is new; every thing is comprehended in the writings of that Greek Philosopher. "He is the supreme truth, and he is the oracle that is to instruct us in every thing that is possible to be known."

* Descartes and Gassendi.

† Aristotelis doctrina est summa veritas, quoniam ejus intellectus fuit finis humani intellectus. Quare bene dicitur de illo quod ipse fuit creatus, & datus nobis, divina providentia, ut non ignoremus possibilia scieri. Averroes, de Gener. Anim. lib. v. cap. i.

Gassendi was the first man, who in the last century had the courage to attack the infallibility of Aristotle†; but he met with almost as many antagonists and enemies, as the first Jansenists that appealed against the bull Unigenitus. The men of honour are obliged to him for having revived in the world the use of a rational philosophy, to which a gentleman may apply himself. This great genius was followed by Descartes, whose new system gave the final blow to the school-philosophy, which was banished for good and all by the monks; and those truly learned men so well restored the sciences, and so good an opinion was conceived of them, that fifteen years after the impression of Descartes's works, the very women argued much more sensibly in metaphysics, than three fourths of the divines in that kingdom. Since that time, people have grown more and more in love with philosophy. All the better sort apply to it; and even the courtiers, notwithstanding the pleasures and intrigues of a noisy court, spend some part of the day in the study of it. There are many of the magistrates, who unbend their minds from the harsh and toilsome study of the law, by the reading of the books of able naturalists.

Since it has been permitted to condemn an absurdity, tho' advanced by Aristotle, or St. Thomas, and since the reputation of those philosophers is no longer the bane of sound reason, the sciences, and especially natural philosophy, have been brought to infinite perfection. The Occult Qualities are no longer considered in any other light than as a confession of the ignorance of the effects of a thing; and besides the discoveries for which we are obliged to the new philosophy we are obliged to it also for the means of knowing how to judge solidly of what it teaches, and prevented from thinking we know what we are ignorant of.

At the rate that people study now tis certain that

† The first work that made this learned man known in the world, was the *De Aetere et Ratione* Book.

more truths are to be discovered in thirty years time, than were known before in two thousand. As people argue only upon evident principles, and nothing is taken for certain but what is manifest, reason, which is no longer clouded by a number of errors that enslaved it, acts with greater efficacy, and more easily unfolds the secrets it aims to discover.

“Mankind, says an eminent philosopher, “not only run into very many errors, because they busy themselves in questions that partake of infinity, their mind being at the same time finite, but also because they apply to those which are of a very vast comprehension, while their minds are narrow *.” That’s another inexhaustible source of the errors of the ancient philosophy. It took in questions the human understanding could not resolve, and which are beyond its reach. The school-philosophers apply’d themselves to few, solid things, but fed on chimeras, and only study’d things that were either incomprehensible or insignificant; and from a secret vanity, and an irregular passion for knowledge, they sought to penetrate into the most secret and most impenetrable truths. They pretended to resolve with ease several questions that were unintelligible, and depending on so many circumstances that twas impossible for the most penetrating genius to discover the truth of them with evident certainty, after many ages profound meditation, tho’ assisted by an infinite number of experiments.

Another fault which confounded the understanding of the school-philosophers, was the little method they observ’d in their studies: They apply’d themselves to ten different sciences perhaps in one day; they did not reflect upon the nature of their understanding, nor employ it in the search of truth, and did not consider that the mind of men, already too much circumscribed, ought not to be diverted from its meditations by new objects, which often erase the preceding ones out of the memory. All the smatterers in learning,

* Mallebranche’s Search after Truth, lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 107.

who are liable to this fault, endeavour in vain to penetrate into things that depend on a great many others, of which they have no knowledge nor perception, because they don't make due reflection, and are too much distracted in their studies.

Descartes was only obliged for most part of his discoveries, to the methods he made use of in his studies, to hinder his capacious mind from rambling to any other objects but those of which he aimed to discover the truth ‡. Therefore how clear and distinct are the ideas upon which he has established the principles of his philosophy? I know very well that this great man was not infallible, and that his writings, tho' they abound with truths, which had not been known but for him, have a tincture, in some parts, of human weakness. But tis ridiculous to think that a philosopher must write nothing but what is evident. 'Tis enough if he gives doubtful things as doubtful, and only proposes them to his readers as mere conjectures.

If the school-philosophers had been as honest and modest as Descartes, a great many errors which have been warmly maintain'd for ages together, would have been acknowledg'd long ago. Instead of those vain disputes which only serv'd to perplex reason, the learned would have communicated their reflections to one another sincerely, and perhaps have cleared up what they did not comprehend, tho' it was earnestly disputed. Huge unwieldy volumes were written, which were only full of words, and convey'd nothing at all to the understanding. One plain question in natural philosophy cleared up in two pages by Descartes, wou'd have served for a book in folio. In justice to Aristotle, it must be confess'd that his natural philosophy is much more tolerable, when stripp'd of the whimsical notions which his various commentators have added to it. It may even be said, that this philosopher had a most capacious genius: He succeeded perfectly well in what he said of the

‡ Mallebranche's Search after Truth, lib. i. p. 102.

passions in his rhetoric ; and there are very fine things in both his political and moral tracts : But as to his eight books of Natural Philosophy, they discover nothing but what was known before, and scarce any thing but what was impossible not to be known. What man is there that does not know that matter cannot be said to have a new form, if it had the same before* ? Who doubts that every thing depends upon form, and that matter alone does nothing ? surely no man is wiser, after having known these things, than he was before. The eight books of Aristotle's Natural Philosophy appertained rather to logic, than to physics : They are only vague and general definitions of terms, which convey only confus'd ideas to the understanding. Aristotle, for example, says indeed that there are four elements, fire, air, water and earth, but he does not shew the nature of 'em, and from all his reasonings no just idea of them can be conceiv'd. He wou'd not even have it supposed that those elements are the fire, air, water and earth which we see, because then our senses cou'd not help communicating some knowledge of them at least to us ; but he endeavours to explain them by the qualities of heat, cold, moisture, drought, weight and levity. How could men of any understanding content themselves with so loose an explanation, which is attended with so many ridiculous impertinences ? I don't wonder at it, because out of their deference to the opinions of that philosopher, they were so complaisant as to admit, that nothing was the first principle of things. For what does the privation of all beings mean but a nothing, a meer nothing ?

Montaigne calculated the rise and fall of the principles of Aristotle's philosophy, at a time when the Nazarenes in general look'd upon them as infallible oracles. " Before, said the author, the principles that were introduc'd by Aristotle, came in vogue, other principles contented human reason as they do at this time. What letters patent, what special privilege

* That is to say, unless it be depriv'd of the former.

can they plead to stop the farther course of our invention, and to engross our belief for all times to come? They are no more exempt from being turn'd out of doors than were those of our antients †." What Montaigne said has happen'd. He foresaw that reason wou'd at length pierce thro' the cloud; he himself despised the philosophy of Aristotle, and he knew all the defects of it.

Fare thee well, dear Isaac, and live contented and happy.

L E T T E R LXXIX.

A pleasant description of the company in a Rhone passage boat. A merry altercation between a military officer and a Friar.—Story of a Chymist, who had spent much time and money in search of the Philosopher's Stone.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Montpellier.——

I N my journey from Lyons to Montpellier, where I arriv'd two days ago, I was glad to make use of the information which thou gavest me of the manners of the French; for if I had not been prepossess'd of their character, I know not what I shou'd have thought of most of the people with whom I travell'd.

I went down the Rhone to Pont St. Esprit in the passage-boat, where were above thirty of us in company, men and women. There were priests, friars, nurses, soldiers, officers, merchants, dogs, cats, squirrels, and what not; so that our boat was pretty much like Noah's ark: I endeavour'd to get into a corner, as far as I could from the racket that two young fellows made about who shou'd set next to a very pretty young lass, who being almost as silly as the lads, laugh'd with her mouth wide open at their quarrel. A gaiety and satisfaction appear'd in her

† Montaigne's Essays, lib. v. p. 141.

countenance, and by certain looks she gave to the other women, she did as good as tell them that she well deserv'd such courtship:

During this dispute, an elderly officer who sat between a friar and me, began to light his pipe: The old soldier every now and then look'd with an evil eye at his neighbour the friar, who was of such a bulky corporation that he took up three quarters of his room. He was in an ill humour to be so straiten'd by this friar, but he was soon deliver'd from him: He had hardly began to smœak, but the reverend father, not accusom'd to the smell of tobacco, made strange grimaces. The officer perceiving this, affected to throw the smoak in his face, which made the friar fret and frown the more, so that he had like to have fallen into a convulsion. Mean time he never budg'd from his place, but sat fast, being loth to quit a post that he had chose as the best in the boat. The officer perceiving that he cou'd gain no ground of him, was resolv'd to joke him as well as funk him. Father, said he, I fancy you have an aversion to tobacco. Alas, sir! said the monk, who thought the officer was going to lay down his pipe, I have a mortal antipathy to it. If that be the case, said the military blade, very gravely, I wou'd advise you never to smœak. And at the same time he puff'd out two such abominable whiffs of tobacco, as had like to have suffocated the poor friar, who fell a coughing as if he wou'd have brought his heart up. When he was a little recover'd, he call'd out to the waterman. Friend, said he, The orders are that there shou'd be no smœaking in your boat, see that they are, obey'd. You are in the right, father, said the master of the vessel, And the captain will be so good, if he please to leave off smœaking. Hark ye, scoundrel, reply'd the officer, All that I will be so good to do is to thresh thee soundly with a cudgel, and then throw thee into the river. By G——d thou art a pleasant rascal indeed, to pretend to give the word of command where I am. Sir, said he, turning toward me, Don't you think it a good jest, that after having

serv'd

serv'd the king my master thirty years together, I shan't have the privilege of smoaking before a lay-brother? You might use better language, reply'd the friar, For I have been a priest longer than you have been in the service. Why then, said the officer, Say mass, and sing vespers if you will, I shan't hinder you. The friar was still for pressing the boat-man to execute his orders; faith, reply'd he to him, you who can preach so well reverend father, do you endeavour to persuade the gentleman: As for my part, I shan't go to pick a quarrel with people that are above my match. I have been baptiz'd already, and don't care to be thrown into the river. Take my advice for once, reverend father, excommunicate the gentleman; then perhaps he will obey you. This scurvy drollery of the boat-man, who aim'd to pacify the wrath of the officer, made the friar quite mad. He abandon'd his place at last, and shifted his quarters to another corner of the vessel. You have no notion, said the officer then to me, of this monkish race; they are as troublesome to travellers, as creditors to young fellows; and if one was to be ruled by these sheap stealing friars, we shou'd be oblig'd to constrain ourselves in every thing that they don't like.

While the officer was talking to me in this way, we came to the place we were to dine at. As soon as we got out of the boat, the friar said to me very courteously, "Pray, sir, what did you think of that officer's behaviour? The men of that profession are intolerably rough and haughty, and shew no regard to persons that deserve the greatest respect. It looks as if they thought they had a right to treat their company, as they treat the king's enemies. I had rather travel with half a score 'prentice-boys, than one of these kill-devil captains."

The monk had no sooner left me to go into the inn, but one of those young fellows who had made such a clutter to sit near the young wench, came to me with a smiling insipid air, "I really pity'd you, sir, said he, For what you suffer'd this morning; you had a very ill situation in the boat; those friars know nothing

nothing but how to mutter their breviary : And those old military hectors are very troublesome ; they are eternally roaring and bawling out, or they surfeit you with the accounts of the battles they have been at. You wou'd have been perfectly merry if you had seen where we did ; for we laugh'd, as you saw, all the way ; and I advise you in the afternoon to place yourself near us."

A tall thin man, who had not spoke one word all the way, shrugg'd up his shoulders and lifted up his eyes at what the young blockhead said ; and as I return'd to the boat to fetch something that I had forgot, he took the opportunity to speak to me privately, and said, " Suffer me, as a fellow-traveller, to give you a piece of advice ; take care how you associate by the way with that young fellow, or else expect to be teaz'd with more questions, impertinencies, and nonsense, in two hours time, than you was ever plagu'd with in your life. I speak this by experience, for in the voyage I have already made with him, what with his talking, whistling, and singing, he has made me deaf. Sometimes he does those three different things all at once, and it often happens that he adds a fourth, and that he dances and capers, talks, whistles, and sings at the same time. In short, he is the most petulant mortal under the sun." The tone of the man's voice, his grave countenance, and his lean, haggard form, made me long to know who, and what he was. After having thank'd him for his advice, I ask'd him if he was going very far off ? I am going, said he, To Montpellier, upon account of a troublesome distemper that I am afflicted with ; and what is worse to me than all, 'tis an ailment that I have not deserv'd ; I am suffering penance, in short, for the sins of my false spouse. How, sir, said I, Cou'd so dear a creature as she possibly hurt you ? To be sure, if she has been the occasion of your misfortunes, it must be innocently." I'll tell you, reply'd the man, In a few words, the cause of my misfortunes.

" When I was very young, I apply'd myself to the study of philosophy, and endeavour'd to penetrate

trate into the nature of things : At length, after a good deal of pains and patience, I thought it high time to join the practice to the theory. I prepar'd my furnaces, directed my fire, and began to put into execution what had cost me so much labour to learn. My employment necessarily took me up so much constant attendance, that I had not time to inspect the behaviour of my wife; who perceiving me in such a fair way of making gold, and of attaining the Philosopher's Stone, was resolv'd likewise on her part to take some pains for an estate; but the best expedient she cou'd think of was, to have a number of lovers; and she play'd her cards so well, that in a little time she acquir'd a very handsome fortune. 'Tis true, there was something mix'd with her riches, which gave her a great deal of mortification; and that was when she found the necessity she was under of the assistance of the God Mercury, to repair certain damages which had been done by the goddess Venus. The worst of it was, that these consequences quite ruin'd my health: My wife, fearing that I shou'd resent this adventure, elop'd one day with a poet of my acquaintance, and I know not whither they are gone. Yet that's not what troubles me, but the being forc'd to abandon my furnaces for some time, to go in quest of some remedy for my distemper; health being one of the principal things that a virtuoso ought to be possess'd of, who hopes to be master of the Philosopher's Stone."

I was overjoy'd, dear Monceca, that I had met with a person that I cou'd talk with concerning the stories that are told about the pretended Philosopher's Stone. "Pray, sir, said I, is it really in the power of men to be master of it? I confess that hitherto I have taken what has been said upon this science, for meer tales." "You were therefore to blame, said he. 'Tis true, there are very few people to whom God has given the power of attaining to the perfect knowledge of so precious an art. But the reality of such art is not a thing to be doubted of. There is much more of this gold made in Europe by the artists,

tists, than what is brought from the Indies, Peru, and other places. All the directors of the mints in France own, that they every year receive much more of this gold and silver, than is imported from foreign countries. The most skilful goldsmiths don't doubt that there are of these true artists. They say too, that their gold is much more perfect than that which is extracted from the mines, and they pretend 'tis an easy matter to distinguish it.

"The operation of the Philosopher's Stone, continued the Chymist, is very possible, and I hope in time to make a happy experiment of it. 'Tis true, that a vast deal of labour and pains is requisite to attain to it. A man ought, in the first place, to be well acquainted with nature: He must be endow'd with a patience, proof against all cross accidents: He should be a man of a strong and vigorous constitution; and if any one of these qualities are wanting in him that attempts to find this grand arcanum, he does but torment himself to no purpose, for he can never bring it to bear." "May I presume, said I to the chymist, to ask you if, by pursuing the principles which are laid down in the books that treat of this science, one may hope to be perfect in it?" "There are few good books, said he, in the great number of those which are very much cry'd up, and which are only written by knaves and impostors, who bring this precious art into disgrace. Of all our authors, king Geber is the most learned and the clearest; yet a man must be a good philosopher, and perfectly acquainted with nature, to understand him. According to that great man, the true way of attaining to perfection in this grand secret is, to incorporate the mineral spirits, when they are purify'd by the art, with the perfect bodies of the metals, after being first render'd volatile, and then fix'd, taking care to preserve all the radical moisture, and augmenting the natural heat by a reasonable concoction of the compound, which is form'd by this wonderful fermentation, and which causes the whole mass to boil and ferment; so that the compound insinuates itself into the most subtle parts of the melted

melted metal, purges it of all its dross, matures it, and changes it into gold."

"I wish, said I to the chymist, that your experiments may succeed according to your heart's desire, and that you may have better luck in search of the Philosopher's Stone, than you have had in matrimony. By your way of talking, I perceive that you are thorough master of the subject of your employment; yet I have heard several able philosophers say, that the beginning of this art was deceitful, the middle of it painful, and the end of it beggary."

The chymist endeavour'd to make me alter my opinion, and assur'd me, that such as with diligence and courage sought after this secret, were at last amply rewarded for their care and pains. However he own'd to me, that he had already spent three fourths of his estate, but he hop'd to compass the work before he had wasted the remainder. He only wanted the return of his health to rekindle his furnaces, and to bring his composition to the utmost degree of perfection. I found him so insatuated and prepossess'd in favour of his art, that I did not think it proper to attempt to beat it out of his head. I had several other conversations with him before we came to this city, in which he was continually extolling the excellence of the Philosopher's Stone; but since our arrival at Montpellier I have not seen him, and perhaps he is already in the hands of the Esculapii of this country; of which in my next.

Take good care of thyself, dear Monceca; and live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXX.

Paris the centre of ridicule as well as of good taste and politeness.—A strange system advanc'd by father Hardouin a Jesuit, who asserted that the works of the Ancients both Greek and Latin, were wrote by some monks long since their time, who assumed the names of the antient authors. The folly, weakness and absurdity of this supposition, demonstrated.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris—

THIS city is as much the centre of ridicule, as it is of a good taste and politeness; and it may be said, dear Brito, to contain the two opposite extremes, which have each a great number of adherents in it; for as the sciences are cultivated, cherish'd, and courted by a great number of gentlemen, so folly is indulg'd here to the last degree, by the most impertinent people in Europe. As these are very numerous, they often counterbalance the authority and decisions of men of sense, and draw the silly vulgar along with 'em, who are always dupes to such as are inclin'd to cheat them. These form the retinue of that power which is in weak and prejudic'd fanatics, who make good sense groan under oppression, and determine men of the greatest abilities to let error take its free course. I am sensible that 'tis very mortifying for men of true learning to be perpetually oblig'd to give rules to a rabble of conceited fools, who are often so very impertinent as to despise the most useful discoveries, and the most perfect works. The most surprizing thing of all is, that among those who cabal against the truly learned ones, we find persons sometimes that have a genius, penetration, and a good share of learning too. What I say, dear Brito, may at first view appear to thee to be a strange paradox; but when thou reflectest on the fantastical humour of men, and how ambitious the greatest part of mankind are to render

render themselves singular, and to give themselves a lustre by maintaining the most extraordinary opinions, thou wilt no longer wonder to see men of learning give a sanction sometimes to the fooleries of the common people, and even invent new ones.

A Nazarene fryar * maintain'd the most extravagant system that cou'd be conceiv'd by the most distemper'd brain, yet he was a monk of wit, and wrote very well ; but his ambition was to be the head of the most impertinent sect that ever rose against the antients. He did not give himself the trouble to discuss what faults might be found in their works ; for he cut the matter short, and maintain'd that the books of the antients, both Greek and Latin, were, after all, but the manuscripts of certain monks since their time, who had borrow'd the names of the antient authors. For example ; he deny'd that the *Æneid* which we have, was written by an author that liv'd in the time of Augustus. Nevertheless, among the writers whom he pronounc'd to be apocryphal, he spar'd the works of Pliny the Naturalist, and quoted them sometimes to give credit to his wretched arguments ; but fell unmercifully upon all the Nazarene doctors, so that not one of 'em found quarter at his hand.

So foolish a supposition, for which this monk was by way of banter call'd, *Pere eternal des Petites-Maisons* ; i. e. "The eternal father of the madhouses," was smartly taken to pieces, and confuted by several learned men, who reduc'd it to nothing † ; yet it had its adherents, so ridiculous as it was, and so contrary to good sense and the light of nature. The love of

* Father Hardouin, the Jesuit.

† See particularly the *Vindiciæ Veterum Scriptorum contra J. Harduinum*, by the celebrated M. la Croze. See also the *Miles Macedonicus* of the learned Norris. The reasons which put father Hardouin upon the invention of this celebrated system, are very well explain'd in the fourth letter of the *Secret Memoirs* of the Republic of Letters ; to which if the reader will please to turn his eye, he will supply the want of what cou'd not find room in this letter.

singularity and novelty, brought it into such vogue with the French, and with foreigners too, as lasted till the delusion was dissipated, and reason regain'd its ascendant.

A man must be quite stupid to imagine that the works of the Greek and Latin authors, which are come down to us, were compos'd at St. Denis in a convent of monks; 'tis there that this impostor pretends that all antiquity was forg'd. But I demand, how 'twas possible that the Greeks, who successively possess'd the MSS. of their authors in their libraries, cou'd agree to burn, or tear them to pieces, and to admit others that were forg'd in their names in this monastery? Tho' Xenophon, Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Euripides, Diodorus of Sicily, &c. had been wrote over again, how cou'd they find their way into the libraries of the Greeks, which were at that time only full of those authors? How cou'd the counterfeit ones be taken in change for the true ones? But perhaps it will be said, that there was no books in Greece, and that the Greeks cou'd neither read nor write some time after Constantine: And the foundation of this hypothesis cannot be supported, but by advancing this impertinent absurdity; for if it be allow'd that the Greeks had eyes, and cou'd both read and write, by consulting the last authors who have wrote of our times, and tracing them successively back to those who are the most antient, we shall find they have all quoted one another, and reported passages out of those that have gone before. The authors of the fourteenth century have quoted those of the thirteenth; those of the thirteenth have quoted their predecessors of the twelfth and eleventh centuries; and by thus always going higher up, we come easily to the source of the originals rejected. At what time was there any appearance observ'd of the forgery of the antient authors? How can it be imagin'd that the Greeks were so complaisant as to receive for authentic, writings which they saw sprung up in one night like mushrooms, and of whose authors they had no knowledge? I demand what they wou'd have said when

when they saw works come out all of a sudden, of which they could never have had the least notion. Is it likely that all men, by common consent, would have given implicit credit to those writings, and not one of them have declared the same diffidence as the friar Hardouin? Surely there would have been ground for it; and if it should be said now, that the *Medea* of Ovid, and the *Thyestes* of Varius are recovered, which indeed may possibly happen, how thoroughly would those pieces be examined, how many men would write pro or con, either to prove them genuine, or to explode them? Of this fact the works of Petronius are an evident proof.

They who maintain that ridiculous hypothesis, which tends to render the precious remains of antiquity suspicious, rely very much upon the ignorance of the times when those authors were counterfeited. But consider, dear Brito, how one absurd argument necessarily brings with it another. How foolish, or rather how stupid is it to think that the works of Demosthenes, Quintilian, Virgil, Horace, Persius, &c. are the productions of an age drowned in ignorance? What! can stupidity and gross ignorance produce that which the profoundest learning and the most painful study are scarce able to imitate? The eminent historians of this age have the same respect for Titus Livy, as

* This passage wants to be more clearly explained: For among the few works which father Hardouin looks upon as really antient, he numbers the *Satires* and the *Epistles* of Horace, and the *Georgics* of Virgil; but he rejects all Horace's *Odes*, and Virgil's *Æneid*. He had discovered, as he says, that some ages ago, I know not how many, several persons united, and undertook to compose the antient History, which was entirely lost. He is exactly informed of the age in which those people lived, as well as of the place where they composed their works. For all their monuments of antiquity were only Cicero, Pliny, the *Georgics* of Virgil, the *Satires*, and the *Epistles* of Horace. He thinks that we had no other monuments of antiquity but those, except some fassli, and a very few inscriptions. Hardouin's *Chronologia ex nummis antiquis restituta*. Prolus. p. 60.

Statius had for the *Æneid*, which he in a manner adored †.

Do but consider, dear Brito, who are the men that they name for the authors of works, whose gallantry and delicacy are still patterns for the nicest courtiers of this age. They are monks that are said to have compos'd the *Heroides*, and Ovid's *Art of Love*, and dunces that are the inventors of Demosthenes's *Philippics*, and the works of Plutarch. But some of these coxcombs in the Republic of Letters, tell us, that the men who compos'd those works, had wit; but they who bought and receiv'd them, were fools. I demand, if it was possible that genius should be confined only to seven or eight persons shut up in one house? And if it be answered, That all the reason and wisdom of mankind were not confined to one single monastery, it must be owned that other learned men dispers'd in the several parts of Europe, and who there compos'd the works that we have at this day, would have made some mention of those forgers of the antient writings.

Really, dear Brito, every man who maintains the system of this friar Hardouin, must take his choice either to pass for a fool, or a fanatic; and tis shewing them too much indulgence, to go about to confute such a heap of absurdities. One reason why the enemies of the antient authors suspect the works of Virgil to be of doubtful authority, is this; Pliny the Naturalist, say they, speaks of a Virgil, author of the *Bucolics*, but does not mention one word of the *Æneid*; therefore the *Æneid* which we have, is not by the same Virgil as the *Bucolics*. I can't help smiling, dear Brito, while I acquaint thee of this absurd argument: I should think it might be as well said thirty or forty years hence, that the psalms were

† ——— Nec tu divinam *Æneida* tenta,
Sed longe sequere, & vestigia semper adora.

Stat. Thebaid.

Th' *Æneid* shines in too divine a sphere,
Trace it with awe, and ever it revere.

not translated into French verse by Marot, because Boileau, who mentions the works of that poet, does not say a word of that version. What would the world think of a man, who two or three hundred years hence should attempt to prove, that the tragedy of Bajazet was not written by Racine, though, by the way, tis one of that author's best pieces, because his friend Despreaux spoke of all that poet's other plays, but never made mention of that?

Undoubtedly, dear Brito, thou wilt be at a loss to guess at the reason which determined this monk to maintain so surprizing an hypothesis. I was as much to seek for them as thee, till some learned men of this country discovered the mystery of the whole affair to me, together with the secret springs by which this brain-sick impostor was actuated. He was a member of a society * that was at utter enmity with another †, which has published several editions of the Greek and Latin Nazarene doctors. These books having been received by the public with universal applause, stirr'd up the jealousy and envy of Hardouin's brethren. To defeat the authority of these editions, he was resolv'd to cancel the antiquity of those authors; and the better to reconcile the Nazarenes to his sentiment, who might justly have been disgusted at the contempt shewn for their antient doctors, this monk thought to extenuate the crime of his system, by giving all the antient authors in general a later date, and insinuating that they were for the most part written by the monks who were the predecessors of those who now plead for their antiquity.

That, dear Brito, was the cause of the ridiculous opinion started in these latter days against the most celebrated writers, and embraced by some novices who thought to make short work with wit, and to give themselves a reputation by applauding such impertinences.

* That of the Jesuits.

† The Congregation of St. Maur.

I should

I shou'd be glad if I had some news to impart to thee ; but for some days past Paris seems to be pretty quiet. However, its present tranquillity is not like to continue long ; and the inconstant humour of the French wou'd soon supply me with a thousand new amusements for the subjects of my letters, if I did not intend to leave this country forthwith. I shall shortly set out for Flanders, to make an end of some affairs which I have at Brussels ; and from thence I shall not fail to write to thee.

Fare thee well, dear Brito, and may the God of our fathers abundantly prosper thee.

L E T T E R LXXXI.

An account of the Coptes, the antient inhabitants of Egypt.—The origin of their religion.—They changed to any religion for money.—They practised confession and absolution.—Some observations on the use and abuse of images.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo—

I Shall now endeavour to give thee a more clear and regular account than I did in my last of those antient inhabitants of Egypt, the Coptes. This people embrace the doctrine of one Eutyches, who is by the European Nazarenes reckon'd a famous arch-heretic. They are wretchedly poor, and all that are left of 'em who are still pretty numerous, have nothing to subsist on but the registers they keep of all the arable lands, which is a privilege they retain, and have always claim'd, on account of their antiquity ; so that there's hardly a landholder in Turkey but has a Coptic writer, who keeps a particular register of all the lands he possesses.

The European Nazarenes, at this place, say, that the Coptes are the most stupid people in the world, and the most obstinate in their error. But I must tell thee that I have talk'd with many of 'em, and don't find

and, that they are more attach'd than all other men are, to the opinions they have suck'd with their milk. I know not with what propriety an European Nazarene can charge a Coptic Nazarene with obstinacy. For they have both the same failing, or the same virtue, call it which thou wilt, because they have both the same fondness for the prejudices which they were born with. The Europeans upbraid the Coptes for adhering blindly to their antient customs, which they call Canons, and for setting up the opinions of their bishops and their priests, as the only rules of their faith and practice. Is not this the sentiment also of all the Nazarenes? When their pontiffs have made a decision, do they not implicitly submit to it? Do they not own, that 'tis not lawful for them to dispute the validity of the decisions of those assemblies which they call Councils? Why should they pretend to require from the Coptes what they don't practise themselves? For what reason is an Egyptian more oblig'd to doubt of the decision of his pontiff, and to examine it before he believes it, than a Nazarene?

It cannot be deny'd, that in all religions there are honest men. A Nazarene thinks, that his religion does not permit him to examine it, and to judge of it by reason. The Copte is in the very same way of thinking, and is as much convinc'd of the learning and candor of his pontiffs, as the Nazarene is of his. They ought therefore, according to their own principles, to keep both to their respective creeds, without examining or disputing them; and 'tis ridiculous for either of the two to require of the other what he condemns himself.

This is, in my opinion, the grossest error in the Nazarene Popish religion. Reason, and the light of nature, which are the gifts of heaven for men to walk by, become of no service to them. As soon as a pontiff has declar'd his opinion, all is over, there's an end of the dispute: People are not allow'd to examine what appears sometimes notoriously repugnant

pugnant to good sense, and they have nothing to do but to submit.

The Nazarenes are fully sensible of the ridiculousness of this conduct; they tax people who are tainted with this prejudice, with stupidity and obstinacy; and are so blind, that they don't consider, that all the reproaches and arguments which they employ against their adversaries, are so many weapons which they furnish them with against themselves. They take it ill, that the Coptes should plead the example of their ancestors, to authorize certain customs. "Are we say those people, wiser than our ancestors? They believe as we believe; why should not we imitate them?" The Missionaries, the Jesuits, and the Nazarene friars, complain very much of such talk, and call it the last refuge of ignorance. "Nothing, say they, can force this intrenchment cast up by obstinacy. 'Tis a buckler, which the keenest arrows of reasoning cannot penetrate."

I would fain ask those missionaries, upon what they ground almost all their customs and ceremonies. They would not fail to quote tradition to me, of which none make more use than the Nazarene papists. 'Tis their great war-horse, and by means of this they get out of all difficulties, of which there's none so bad but may easily be resolv'd by the help of tradition. How unjust is it for men to go to deprive others of privileges, which they so bountifully grant to themselves! What! shall it be lawful in Europe to authorize a custom, nay to consecrate it, how ridiculous soever, as soon as 'tis approv'd by the ancients? and shall the same way of thinking be prohibited in Africa, on pain of being censur'd as stupid and headstrong? If any man can shew me a reason for this prejudice. I am ready to embrace the opinion of the Nazarenes; but 'till then I pity both them and the Coptes for their blindness; nay, I think the Europeans the more contemptible, because they are not a jot the wiser themselves for the ridiculousness which they perceive in the opinions of the others.

* Mallet's Relation of Egypt, part ii. p. 63.

'Tis however certain, dear Monceca, that the Coptes are a sorry people. They often make a scandalous traffic of their religion, and for a small sum of money several of 'em will enter into the Nazarene communion, and abandon it as soon as their interest and hopes begin to fail. They have a proverb among them which says, *Maphis Fellou, Maphis Quinisse*, * i. e. No money, no church: so that the conversions of the Coptes are upon the same footing as the service of the Switzers; No Money, no Swiss. It signifies nothing to tell them, that they are going to plunge themselves again into heresy; they return quietly to their antient church, and give no other reason for what they do, but that they pray'd in the Romish way as long as they were paid for it, and that more than this they were not oblig'd to. Judge thou from hence of the fruit and progress of those missions, so much boasted in Europe. All the Franks that are here own, that never was there a Copte who dy'd out of his own religion, and that sooner or later they all return to it. Nay, 'tis ridiculous to think that it can happen otherwise, considering the hatred and contempt which they have for the faith of the European Nazarenes; for from their infancy they are entertain'd with no discourse, but what is for the disadvantage of the religions that are contrary to their own; they are inspired with a hatred to all foreign opinions; and 'tis impossible for them ever to conquer those prejudices.

In Europe there are ways of enlightening the mind; the Sciences are of very great service to free reason from the fetters that keep it in captivity. By studying, men are taught to doubt; and doubting naturally leads to a search after truth. In Egypt profound ignorance gives new force to prejudices, and renders them even invincible: And, as superstition and ignorance always go together, the most ridiculous fables, and the most whimsical customs, pass with those blind people for miracles,

* Mallet, p. 109

The Coptes, as well as the Nazarenes, believe that their priests, by pronouncing certain words, have a power to wipe out all sins; but they don't, like the others, make a particular confession of their faults to their priests, and only accuse themselves in general of the sins they have committed, in thought, word and deed. Then the priest pronounces this word Allahieramae*; and the ceremony is over, on paying a small sum of money, by the person who is cleansed from all sin, to him who did him that service. The Coptic priests are as covetous and selfish as the European monks; so that avarice seems to be a vice inseparably attached to that profession.

The Coptes fast very austerely, and in the same manner as we do, and eat but once in the day, viz. at sun-set. There are images in their churches, but they pay them no worship, and only look upon them as monuments of things past. I must own to them that I don't condemn images, so long as no other use is made of 'em †. God, in his law, has only forbidden us to pay them that worship which tends to idolatry; so far was he from excluding them out of private houses, that he permitted them to be plac'd in the temple, and even in the sanctuary; for two cherubims were plac'd there upon the ark §.

Image

* This word signifies, God pardon thee.

† I desire the readers seriously to consider, if the enemies of Aaron Monceca have done justice to that Jew, in charging him with being an Iconolastres, and a furious adversary of images.

‡ The fathers of the church, who have maintained the worship of images, plead the figures that were plac'd in the temple for their authority. Nevertheless, one difficulty still remains which their adversaries object to them, viz. That never was any worship paid to those figures.

§ John Damascenus, in his defence of images, has not forgot this particular: "Say'st thou that the ark, the urn, the mercy seat, are not the curious workmanship of the hand of man? Dost thou think that they are not carv'd out of ignominious and contemptible matter? And what was that whole tabernacle? Was it not an image? Was it not a shadow and a copy?" John Damascenus, Apologetic. pro Venerat Sanctar. Imaginum,

Images are speaking characters, which represent to our eyes the events of past ages, or those of our own. I don't think that the use of godly books will ever be condemn'd, or that they will be banish'd out of churches: So long as a picture is consider'd as a book, and only serves to edify the mind, by recalling the actions of illustrious and pious men to it's remembrance, the use of them can't but be good. There are a great many Nazarenes who can't read, and would be ignorant of many pious passages, that tend to edify them, were it not for pictures and images, which are the books of the ignorant. I cannot, therefore, approve of the furious zeal of many people, who, out of devotion, have demolish'd and broke in pieces those monuments of sculpture and painting, which are worthy of the admiration of all good judges. In my travels to Hungary, and some northern countries, I have seen the sad effects of this hatred of images. 'Tis true, that this fury, which had a tendency to renew the barbarity of the Goths, is intirely at an end. The Nazarenes, who, at this day, exclude images from their temples, only condemn the worship that is paid to them, and only separate them from the ceremonies of their religion, for fear that the vulgar, who are so inclinable to superstition, shou'd become idolatrous without thinking it.

'Tis very certain, that there are some Nazarene priests who don't worship images; and think that they are commanded by their religion, to consider them only as things that ought to excite them to piety, and the ideas which they present to their imagination. 'Tis altogether as certain, that they are only a people of the best education that keep within those bounds; for the vulgar are excessively prone to idolatry, especially they who are so stupid that they can't distinguish meer veneration from worship. There are some boors, who wou'd suffer themselves to be cut in pieces for the sake of a wooden image,

p. 78. The same father had just said a little before, *Jubet enim (Deus) ut exculptant similitudinem Cherubim; and God commands that they carve the figure of a Cherubim.*

representing the patron saint of his village. He has very long conversation with him, prays to him for a good harvest, for which he promises him several offerings, and is really persuaded, that there is in this timber a supernatural virtue.

The craft of the monks, who publish miracles every now and then, leads the people farther into error. They declare that one image spoke, that another mov'd its eye-balls, or sweated blood. Is not all this with a design to make the vulgar believe, that in those statues there is something divine and supernatural? Is it not to lead and draw them into idolatry? And what peasant is there, who when he is persuaded that such an image has spoke several times, will not imagine, that since it has the use of speech, it has (no doubt) also the faculty of hearing? The image is, after this, no longer a mere character, to revive the memory of a godly person, but it becomes a demi-god, to whom he addresses the same prayers as a pagan made to a Mercury, or a Juno. Thus the avarice of the monks, who endeavour to bring custom to certain images by the ruin of those of their neighbours, and to draw in all the gains to their own temple, perverts a custom, which is of itself pious, and useful to the edification of mankind, into a crime.

What I say to thee will, no doubt, be unpalatable to some of our brethren, who would be offended, and think their synagogues profan'd, if they saw any images and pictures there. But if thou dost but reflect, that when we came out of Egypt, we left an idolatrous people; that we might have had an inclination to fall into their errors; that we were not yet confirm'd against idolatry, as plainly appears from the golden calf which our fathers set up in the wilderness thou wilt no longer wonder at the wise precautions which Moses took to put every thing out of our way that might lead us to commit faults. How happy were it for all people, if they had so wise a guide!

Fare the well, dear Monceca; live content and happy.

LETTER

LETTER LXXXII.

Some probable conjectures with regard to the antiquity of the Egyptian Pyramids.— The Egyptian Priests said to be the first Philosophers.— The notions of different pagan philosophers concerning the Supreme Being.— Philosophical observations thereon.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris—

I Received thy letter upon the manners and customs of the Coptes that are descended from the antient Egyptians. They being so contemptible puts me in mind of the vile state of the Greeks, Romans and Carthaginians. I can't conceive how 'twas possible for those four nations that were so famous heretofore, to become the basest and the most despicable people in the world.

The Egyptians were the first that knew and cultivated the arts and sciences; we don't know such antient edifices any where as the famous pyramids, which are proofs of the grandeur of those by whose order they were erected, and of their skill in architecture by whom they were built. But the names of those by whom those superb monuments were rais'd, were as great a secret 2000 years ago as they are now. By this thou may'st judge of their antiquity. The Egyptians pretend they are far more antient than the Jews; but since the sacred scriptures determine our belief, 'tis probable that the pyramids were erected a few years after it.

There's one argument however that seems to oppose this opinion: Was Egypt, at that time, so full of people that they could spare hands to undertake such vast buildings as requir'd so many labourers, and so much labour? The countries about the Tygris and the Euphrates, were the first that were inhabited by the descendants of Noah's children; but Egypt, not till afterwards.

Some persons imagine that those pyramids were built before the deluge; but this is an opinion liable to many objections, and seems to have no colour for it, but their unknown antiquity.

The sciences were cultivated by the Egyptians, in the earliest times: and as soon as they began to be known, they discover'd all the marks that denote the antiquity of a nation; and they had a settled worship and religion, with laws and customs, the use of which did not seem to be modern.

The priests of this nation were the first philosophers. 'Tis said they own'd one supreme God, one only perfect being; but 'tis my opinion, they never had a true idea of a Divine Being; and that from the moment that men were once plung'd into idolatry, they had no longer any just notion of God, in what country soever they dwelt. When I speak of men, I mean even the most learned, among whom I include the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman philosophers. The first of these allow'd of two chief eternal deities, the Sun and Moon, that govern'd the whole world. They believ'd that the whole system of nature was form'd of the bodies of those two planets; and that spirit, fire, dry and moist, were portions or members of that system*. This bears a great resemblance to the modification of Spinoza, and the system of that apostate Jew was that of almost all the antient philosophers, who perplex'd it by mixing several other falsehoods with it. When we clear up this chaos of false and vague ideas, it will appear, that the pagans; who said, or believ'd, that there was but one deity, acknowledg'd him in the same manner as they acknowledg'd there was but one world; and, by consequence, the God in whom they believ'd was a God compos'd of 100000 different Gods, since every thing that is material has parts necessarily, and by

* Ideoque totam naturæ universæ corpus sole et luna consummari; cujus partes jam indicatæ, spiritus, ignis, siccitas, humor, et æria tandem naturæ; e quibus, ut in homine caput, manus, pedes, et alias partes numeramus, eodem modo corpus mundi constat. Diodor. Siculus, lib. i. cap. 2.

consequence is divisible. Every part, therefore, of which the divinity was compos'd, must be of itself a God; for how absurd wou'd be the consequence of a position, that a being divine is compos'd of parts that are not divine! It wou'd be the same thing as to offer to prove, that a thinking matter, if such a thing could be, was composed of unthinking parts.

It can't be said, that any of the antient philosophers ever had a notion of the spirituality of God †. None of them could ever rise to such a sublime speculation. Plato is the only one, who, by his conversation with the Jews, was furnish'd with any notion of the immortality of the Divine Being. Nor can it indeed be said, that he had a right notion of it; and so far was what he said of it from being receiv'd by the other philosophers, that they rejected it, as what was unintelligible, and contrary to reason, and the light of nature. Cicero, when he examines the several opinions of the philosophers concerning the nature of God, does not think it worth his while to stand to examine the sentiments of Plato, "Who, says he, holds a God to be without a body, and his argument cannot be understood*." But Plato himself only own'd a Deity after a corporeal manner, and the spirituality which he ascribes to it is but a sort of substance compos'd of a subtile delicate matter, which he believes to have been the principle of all things created. In what other sense can this external world that was given out, be explain'd, which according to the philosopher, is nothing more than the substance which God exerted from his own bosom, or which he ingender'd to form the universe? Is not that a material Deity, which exerts seed from its own bosom? If the world be a part of the substance of God, as Plato pretends, admitting of the supreme God in the first place, and afterwards of a God, the visible minister

† See the Secret Memoirs of the Republic of Letters, Letter V. where this matter is very fully treated.

* Quod Plato sine corpore Deum esse censet; id quale esse possit, intelligi non potest. Cicero de Natura Deorum, lib. i.

of the invifible God creator of the world, which is the third God : Are there not as many Gods as there are parts in matter ? And is not his fyftem a rough draught of that of Spinoza ?

'Tis my opinion, dear Ifaac, that, from the moment that men fell into idolatry, God intirely withdrew his Spirit from them, and their pofterity ; that they had no longer a true notion of the Divine Being ; and all the ideas they conceiv'd of it were deriv'd from what they ftill remember'd their ancestors had transmitted to them, of a Deity which they had for-faken.

I know that this principle leads to the opinion, that we have no innate idea of God : But I believe, that a careful attention to this queftion is enough to convince any man, that the foul has no innate idea of the divine being in itfelf, and acquires no knowledge of it, but by the reflection which it makes, when 'tis in a capacity of reasoning upon the great miracles, which 'tis fenfible could not have been operated but by a fupreme and perfect being. If the foul had an innate idea of the divine being, it could not be a miftaken one ; and the characters impreff'd by the hand of the Almighty cou'd not be effac'd. But the pagans appear to be fo far from having had a juft idea of the true Deity, that we are surpriz'd at the errors into which they have fallen. There's ftill a multitude of people that pay adoration to things the moft contemptible. The common answer to thefe arguments, which I look upon as demonftration, is, that God engraves his idea in the hearts of mankind in general ; but that men, by wrong applications, afterwards corrupt it. Really, dear Ifaac, this is a pitiful argument ; for what can be thought of more impertinent than thofe abftracted ideas ? Befides, abftracted ideas fuppoſe a foreknowledge of objects that reſemble one another, and have ſome relation together : But abſtraction cannot agree with a firſt idea, which ought to be pure and ſimple ; nor, by confequence, with the idea of the Divine Being.

'Tis absurd to say, that God communicates an idea to us directly contrary to the being which he is willing to make known to us; and if the extravagant notions which the pagans had of the Deity, had been impress'd on them immediately by the Deity itself, it might as well be asserted, that the soul brings with it, into the world, the most extravagant notions, and that they are innate with it.

'Tis easy to prove, dear Isaac, that the idea of the Deity not being innate with the soul, there is no idea of him that is so. If the Supreme Being had chose to imprint any notions of him immediately, he would no doubt, have chose to give mankind a clear and distinct notion of the Divinity, rather than impress them with notions of general principles of morality.

If it be true, that we have any of those principles connate with us, why do men think so differently of things that constitute good and evil? Whence comes it, that what is blameable in one country is look'd upon as virtuous in another? The Topinambous think, that by taking a cruel revenge on their enemies, they open their way to heaven; and he that eats up the greatest number of 'em is reckon'd the man of the greatest piety and bravery*. The Turks, and especially the Egyptians, look upon those persons as saints, whom the Nazarenes wou'd think it but just to burn at the stake†. They confer the highest honours upon monsters that human nature blushes at, such as have nothing but the human shape, and are guilty of errors a hundred times more to be blam'd than those people who drew down fire from heaven to destroy them. The pagans thought they serv'd their Gods by sacrificing a number of Nazarenes to them. The Portuguese think they do hon-

* John de Lery, cap. xvi.

† We have heard it said, that it was to be told, moreover, by an interpreter to our Mucelus, that the saint whom we saw there, is, by publick authority, to be commended as a holy divine person, eminent for integrity; forasmuch as he never had copulation with women or boys, but only with she-asses and mules. Baumgarten, lib. ii. cap. i. p. 73.

our to heaven by causing our brethren to be burnt. The Molinists make an offering to God of the torments which they inflict on the Jansenists. The Druses of mount Lebanon marry their own daughters, and on a certain day of the year they use one another's wives promiscuously †. What becomes then, dear Isaac, of the innate principles of morality? Where is that universal consent, which they who maintain those ideas require to be granted to them by all nations? That's their strongest argument. But experience being against them, all their philosophical reasoning must fall to the ground; and 'tis disputing to no purpose, to deny a thing, that every one, who will be at the trouble of inquiry, cannot but discern.

Some persons think the opinion of innate ideas useful and necessary to prove the existence of God. They can't bear to part with an argument which they think decisive against the Atheists. When once, say they, 'tis made appear, that ideas are connate with the soul, libertines are forc'd to own the existence of the Divine Being, because the soul bringing the idea of a God with it into the world, it must necessarily be that God himself who imprinted it. But they who talk after this manner don't see that they beg the question: For the Spinosisists deny these ideas, and the time which is lost, in going to prove the truth to them, is time spent in mere cavillings, which clears up no point; whereas, by having recourse at first to substantial arguments, 'tis easy to convince people, who are so blind as to deny a thing, of which it is as easy to give them proofs, as of their own existence.

I don't believe there is an atheist so weak as to presume to say, that he always had a being. Therefore something must necessarily have been before him; and, to go still further back, something must have been from all eternity; for it would be the height of folly, to pretend to assert, that nothing can produce a real being. Now, this being, which has existed from

† See Bospier's Remarks upon Ricaut, tom. ii. p. 649.

all time, must necessarily be omnipotent, because it is the source and principle of all other beings; and because from it they derive their power and faculties. By necessary consequence this first being must also be an intelligent being; for man is sensible that he is himself an intelligent being. Now, from whence cou'd he that was created by an eternal being, derive that intelligence, if he had not from that same eternal being receiv'd it? By consequence, therefore, this eternal being must be not only omnipotent, but also intelligent.

What need is there of innate ideas to prove the being of a God, and to prove it beyond contradiction? What is an eternal being, sovereignly powerful and intelligent, if it be not God?

Farewell, dear Isaac; live content and happy, and be crown'd with prosperity.

LETTER LXXXIII.

A description of an Opera-Ball, at Paris.—A detail of some adventures that happened there.—Some thoughts on matrimony.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris. ———

I Was yesterday at a theatrical representation, which I had never seen before. The chevalier de Maifin carried me to the ball of the opera, which is an assembly that is capable of furnishing a philosopher with matter enough for thirty years reflection. I shall endeavour to give thee the justest idea of it that I can. Thou knowest in what form the rooms are built for plays; for thou hast seen such at Vienna as are like those at Paris. The pit and stage are join'd together, which forms a floor where there's dancing; and the boxes round are full of persons in masks, who often come to the ball neither to dance, nor to see dancing, but for something of more importance. Love is the sovereign of the place, and presides over the most amiable

amiable maskers. Here, under various disguises, the lover and the mistress laugh at the vain watchings of the jealous husband, whose precautions, after he has teased himself for a whole year, are all defeated by one ball of an opera. In the crowd of maskers, the duchess is confounded with the citizen's wife, and the 'prentice-boy with the grand signior; for in assemblies of this sort, love, joy and pleasures put all the company on a level.

The Parisians have a profound respect for every face that is mask'd; but the mistakes which have sometimes happen'd, render them very cautious; for if they were less circumspect, they would often fail in the regard due to persons of distinction, by treating and talking familiarly with such whom they think all the while to be but private people.

The reservedness which the masquerade habit demands, often gives occasion to the most pleasant adventures in life, in a country where gallantry and love are the business of three parts in four of the inhabitants. A young woman, whose morose husband was so cross-grain'd that he deserv'd the fate of the unfortunate Vulcan, only waiting for the convenience of a ball to favour her beloved gallant; for her motions were so continually watch'd and restrain'd by her jealous husband, that she was forc'd to have recourse to extraordinary methods to avoid his pursuit and to baffle his vigilance. She wrote to her lover that she would be at the ball mask'd in a green Domino, and that she would place herself in the third box on the right-side of the stage. The spark was to the last degree, impatient for the hour of the assignation. As soon as the clock struck eleven, away he flew to the opera; and as soon as he enter'd the place he cast his eyes on the third box, and there perceiv'd a masker in a green Domino, who he did not doubt was his dear mistress. He made his addresses to her very briskly, and said every thing to her that the most tender love inspires. The masker return'd no answer but was perfectly mute. The spark, astonish'd at this coldness, reproach'd her for treating him with

such an undeserved indifference : " What ! says he, madam, is this the happy minute that I so much wish'd for ? Did you send me word, that you would come to the ball, only to have the pleasure of wounding me to the heart ? For God's sake, madam, what have I done to displease you ? What ! not a word ! Alas ! this silence drives me to despair. In return for so much love."—The Nazarene spark would have proceeded farther with his complaint, but he was interrupted by a loud laugh from the masker that he spoke to, which very much surprized him ; but his astonishment was much greater, when, by the laugher's unmasking herself, he perceiv'd that the person whom he took for his mistress was his own wife. However, his trouble was soon over ; for conjugal infidelity is no extraordinary case in France, where a sickle husband is far from being a phoenix. He himself laugh'd also at his mistake, and then went round the ball-room in quest of the person whom he had not yet found. His wife, happening to be at the opera before his mistress, had taken the very place the latter intended for herself, who was then forced to go to another ; and the resemblance of their masquerade habits had drawn this lover into his mistake.

I had this story from the chevalier de Maisin, who told me another, which is, in my opinion, more entertaining than that : A farmer-general of the revenue, who had carried his mistress to the ball, did not suspect any rival, but was mistaken ; for a captain of dragoons was the man she was fondest of ; and the farmer was no otherwise happy in her charms, than as he paid dearly for the favours she granted him. The fair-one stole out of the crowd of maskers, and went to pass a quarter of an hour with the officer in a hackney-coach. These hir'd vehicles are happy places for the retirement and screen of lovers, while the ball holds. The farmer-general, burning with some desire of concupiscence, thought the surest method to drive away the temptation was to yield to it. Therefore he went to the ball in quest of his dear mistress, and, in a certain group of the maskers, he

thought he saw her. He squeez'd her by the hand and made a motion to her to withdraw. She consented accordingly, and went with him, but said not one word. The farmer general was no sooner got to the steps of the ball-room, but he perceiv'd the captain of the dragoons returning with his mistress, who had not yet put on her mask again. 'Thou may'st guess, dear Isaac, how much he was surpriz'd. He curs'd the ball, the opera, the captain of the dragoons, his mistress and himself, a thousand times. He broke off for ever from the perfidious dame; and being curious to know who the lady was that so freely follow'd him, he found that she was one of those common strollers, who are always the humble servants of every man that asks them.

Every ball is productive of some particular story; for the entertainments of this kind are signaliz'd by a number of adventures, owing to love and jealousy. These days, or rather nights of pleasure are fatal to husbands and parents too, let 'em take ever so much care of their wives and daughters; for the liberties indulged at the ball, and the conveniencies to the mask, deceive the most watchful Argus's.

The assemblies of this kind are very much like the antient pagan ceremonies of the temples of Cytherea and Paphos; and sure I am that the goddess Venus therein receives at least as many vows and offerings.

Would'st thou believe, dear Isaac, that in a country where love and gallantry bear such a sway, the favours of the fair-sex are generally carried by money. But so it is, that few of them are proof against speech that are larded with Louisd'ors; and I am certain that there are more hearts at Paris that are sold than given. This is a truth which the women don't care to own; but, on the contrary, they affect a prodigious contempt for such whose affections they suspect are govern'd rather by interest, than a tender passion. Tho' a woman that finds fault with a neighbour or friend of hers, often follows the very maxim which she condemns. They don't see their own failing which self-love disguises from them; and they on

judge of themselves thro' that mist of the passions, which intirely clouds the mirror whereby we examine our own hearts. Thus did Philip heretofore, who was king of Macedon, preach a moral to his son quite different from that which he practis'd himself. He blam'd him for being profuse of his money to the Macedonians, and reproach'd him for placing a dependance upon such hearts as were not given, but sold*.

There's a strong attachment in all men to study excuses for their follies; and the philosophers themselves are not exempt from this failing, which serves to keep the vices in countenance. The women, whose vanity is even stronger than the mens, are also more fruitful in apologies to colour those parts of their conduct which are least conformable to virtue. When they are to excuse their being false to their husbands, they say, that they are captivated by some deluding bias, which it is not in their power to resist. They were mach'd from their infancy with a man whom they did not love: Why shou'd they be condemn'd to pass their best days in sadness and melancholy? And if the laws make a desire, which they derive from nature, a crime, why did the men make such whimsical laws?

Thus do the fair infidels find reasons to justify their conduct. The coquette has also her excuses ready: "Is it any harm, says she, to be obliging? As long as I commit no crime, what is my husband the worie for the fine speeches that are made to me, or the honours that are paid me? Because I am married, and can't bear those praises at home which I deserve, must I be forc'd to shun the company of the complaisant? Must I live retir'd, like a she bear in a den, to please my husband, and to quiet his foolish jealousy? If he is so silly as to indulge himself in a thousand chimerical notions, so much the worse for him; for my part, I'll not bury myself alive to bring him to reason."

* Cicero de Officiis, lib. ii.

In this manner does the coquette justify and authorise her conduct; and why should she not, since she, who even sells her favours, has also the secret of justifying herself? She that is young, handsome, and lovely, why should not she make an advantage of the graces which heaven has granted to her? Time flies away, and so does beauty, and old age comes on; whereas no care has been taken to amass an estate wherewith to end her days in peace. When the season of love is once past, it never returns. A young woman who is pretty, and has but a small fortune, ought always to have in her mind the fable of the grasshopper and pismire. If, before her beauty is faded, she has not taken care to fill her coffers, it will be in vain for her to beg relief.

Que faisés-vous autrefois ?

Dit-on à cette emprunteuse.

Je chantois, ne vous deplaîse,

Nuit & Jour à tout venant.

Vous chantiés ? J'en suis bien aise.

Eh bien, gueusez maintenant.*

i. e. "What did you do for a living heretofore?" said the ant to the grasshopper, who came to borrow some provision out of her store. I sang day and night, an't please you? I am very glad to hear it. Well then, now go and beg.

There is nothing, dear Isaac, but a woman can gild over with specious pretexts, and the more wit she has, the more excuses she has at hand for her faults. God keep us therefore from this faithless sex; let us fly their deceitful charms, and look upon them as one of those draughts, which, though delicious to the taste, conceal the most deadly poison. Not but I think it possible for a philosopher to be sensible of the passion of love, and that there are some women deserving of the esteem of those that are the most rigid. But there's great danger of being deceived in the

* Parodies of Fontaine's first Fable.

choice. The heart of man is commonly determin'd by its own inclination ; and, without staying to be advis'd by reason, blindly follows the bias which draws it. Love is kindled by a glance of the eye, instead of being the fruit of reflection, and is fed by a certain sympathy, but seldom by an acquaintance with the perfections of the object belov'd ; and 'tis extinguish'd, often without knowing why, the very moment when it was least expected.

It has been frequently disputed, whether a man of learning, and one that applies to the sciences, ought to marry ; and several arguments have been urg'd pro and con. But, for my part, I think 'tis far better for all that are inclin'd to study, to enjoy intire liberty, than to be in a sort of slavery, which, be it ever so gentle, is nevertheless sometimes disagreeable. To be a woman, and not have whimsies, is a thing impossible. She that has fewest, is the wisest. A philosopher is diverted in his reflections by the uneasiness and cares of house-keeping. Be he ever so poor, if he is single, he can easily maintain himself ; but when he is married, the case is otherwise. If he is rich, he is still the more embarrass'd ; the advancement of his family, the settlement of his children, the whimsies and ambition of his wife ; all things of this kind tease and torment him, be he ever so much master of himself and his passions. I am sure that Socrates, notwithstanding his philosophical phlegm, would have been glad more than once, that all the devils in hell had his wife. If he did not say it, believe me, dear Isaac, he certainly thought so. Were it but the fashion in France for a man to sell his wife when he is weary of her, I know a great many men of learning, who wou'd part with theirs very cheap ; and if this privilege was only granted to students, the greatest drones among the French would soon cultivate the sciences, in order to acquire so noble a prerogative.

Fare thee well, dear Isaac ; live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXXIV.

The pains taken by men of letters arises chiefly from the desire of transmitting their names to posterity. Some men have been guilty of very ridiculous and silly actions from that motive.—The knowledge of ourselves, the most useful study.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris.—

WHEN I see, in the several countries thro' which I travel, a number of happy people, yet ignorant, and almost reduced to the instinct of beasts, I consider the care and pains, which men of letters take, to put themselves in a way of transmitting their name to posterity. What hardships, what mortifications, do not most of 'em suffer! There must be something very cogent in the desire of penetrating thro' the dark night of ages, for a man to be so ready to sacrifice the most precious season of life to that view, and the only time too in which life can be truly enjoyed.

From the few years to which nature has limited the course of man's life, we should abstract the first fifteen, as being spent either in infancy or in the painful tasks of education: When man comes to the 13th lustre, he does nothing but waste every day. The mind, as well as the body, grows languid, and both are equally a prey to all infirmities. Therefore reckoning from the age of 16 to that of 60, the state of man is properly no more than 45 years; and this term so short, so valuable, is employ'd by men of learning, in painful, and often disagreeable occupations, which afford them no other comfort than the hopes of having their memory transmitted to posterity.

I own, dear Isaac, that the sciences, when we have once stripped them of the difficulties that attend them, have something in them that is satisfactory; and that a Geometrician, and a natural philosopher

sopher, after having taken infinite pains for a course of 20 years, think themselves well rewarded by the discovery of some truths, till then unknown. But if they would dive into their own hearts, they would perceive, that the hopes of immortalizing their names, are a much stronger incentive to them to be assiduous in the search of those new truths, than the mere pleasure of extricating them from the chaos in which they were bury'd. If they were well assured that nobody but themselves could discover them, and that they should never be allowed to divulge them, I very much question whether they would be willing to purchase the knowledge of them, by the continued toil and labour of so many years together.

Philosophers, and men of learning, are incessantly talking of the contempt of glory, of wisdom, and of the tranquility of the soul. Notwithstanding all their fine and magnificent harangues, tis certain, that were it not for glory and vanity, ignorance would extend its empire over all mankind. Twas to the desire of being distinguished from the vulgar, of excelling their fellow-creatures, and of inspiring them with admiration, that antiquity ow'd the Aristotle's, the Plato's Sophocles's, the Euripides's, and the Demosthenes's: And to the same desire do the moderns owe the illustrious men that have performed such fine and such noble works in these latter days.

If all the learned men, of the several kinds, had nothing in view but to study the moral virtues, and to perfect themselves in wisdom, they would have confined their application to the knowledge of themselves. They would not have study'd to measure the heavens, to follow the planets, in their course, to examine the various productions of nature, to anotamize them, and to extend their searches to such a nicety, as to discover the weight of the air. "All this, they would have said, does not answer our designs. What is the end we have in view? Tis to find the means of being happy ourselves, and of promoting the happiness of other men. Let us, therefore, study whatever may serve to render us virtuous,

tuous, and let us communicate our wisest reflections to our companions and countrymen. What profit will it be to them to know that there is no vacuum, and that the earth moves round the sun? It won't render them better natur'd, nor more serene, nor even more happy. The ignorant, who know nothing but what they have learnt from nature, assisted by some weak and general instructions, are often more happy than men of learning. How many tradesmen are there, who, following their occupations quietly at home, live without ambition, with all their family about them, with much more comfort and satisfaction than the greatest philosophers in the midst of their studies, with piles of books about them, which treat of the contempt of glory! 'Tis not learning, therefore, that renders people happy, but probity. Natural philosophy, metaphysics, and rhetoric, all of them together, are not productive of true wisdom, because 'tis sometimes found with a shoemaker and a ploughman. We must seek it where it is to be found, and prefer the quiet and peaceable ignorance of a poor mechanic to the unprofitable learning of a philosopher, and a rhetorician."

"Tis certain dear Isaac, that if they, who have been at so much pains to communicate the knowledge they have acquir'd to mankind, had acted only from a love to wisdom, they could not have help'd making those reflections; and, by consequence, they would have thought it a hundred times more useful, to teach them the art of living happy and quiet, than to ramble in quest of some truths, the knowledge of which, tho' not to be acquir'd without infinite toil, is, after all, of no benefit. They would have said to them in plain terms, "Lay hold of the present juncture; be virtuous, mind your business, and don't idly squander away those moments which you can never recover. Time flies away, and, as long as your conscience is not troubled with remorse for crimes, as long as you follow the laws of probity, you have every thing that is necessary to enjoy it. An application to unprofitable learning will only serve to rob you of a present good

good, in hopes of a future imaginary happiness. Wise men want nothing, and philosophers have need of every thing. If you only aim to enjoy those favours peaceably, which heaven has granted you, your happiness is in your own power : You have nothing to do but to enjoy it. But the destiny of mankind would be very miserable, if their happiness depended on the knowledge of things that are quite foreign to them."

But this, dear Isaac, is not the usual method, which the learned take to instruct mankind. They are far from talking in such a style : If they did, they would be like the pontiffs of Rome, that should blame people for believing in indulgencies ; and one might consider them in the same light, as people that run down their own merchandise. Far from acting thus, every man of letters is for extolling his own particular study to the skies ; and is even for establishing the glory of it at the expence of the other sciences. A rhetorician praises philosophy but faintly. The greatest effort of the human understanding consists, according to him, in the talent of persuading by the force of eloquence, and moving the heart by the sublimity of diction. A philosopher, on the other hand, looks upon a rhetorician as a declaimer, whose discourses give a false lustre, and offer nothing that is solid to those who are for reasons, and not for words. As a natural philosopher, he even intirely condemns the use and the study of rhetoric, as things pernicious to the public welfare. " They who mask and paint women," said a famous sceptic philosopher, speaking of rhetoricians, " do less harm, because tis no great matter whether we see them in their natural complexions or no ; whereas these make it their business to deceive, not our sight, but our judgment ; and to adulterate and corrupt the very essence of things : The republics that have maintained themselves in a regular and well-modell'd government, such as those
of

of Crete, and Lacedæmon, had orators in no very great esteem *."

That passion, so common to the learned, of praising that science only, to which they apply, is it not an evident proof, that vanity, the desire of glory, and ambition, have more share in the pains they take, than the love of wisdom? If they only toiled for the instruction of mankind; either they would solely apply themselves to things absolutely useful, or when they cultivated those that are of more curiosity than profit, they would praise all sciences alike, and not give the preference to that in which they think they excel. But as they have a notion, that the esteem paid to it, has an influence upon that which they hope to acquire, self-love unites their interest with the interest of that: For the philosopher thinks, that the more philosophy is respected, his person will be the more in esteem. The historian, the poet, the rhetorician, have the same idea, and they contend which shall be most emphatical in the commendation of History, Poetry, and Rhetoric.

The love of wisdom, dear Isaac, is not so greedy in pursuit of praise. A man who only desires to live to be useful to his countrymen, discovers not partiality, as to the rank and esteem that ought to be granted to such as give them instructions, polish their understanding, or form their hearts. But vanity, and the desire of shining, and rising above our countrymen, don't inspire sentiments so disinterested; and rather incite self-love, and create a jealousy, which is but the more violent for being concealed. These passions are the cause that men of learning are commonly so unjust to one another. They are always afraid, lest the reputation of others should diminish their own, and stop up their passage to that immortality to which they aspire with so much fury. I think I may, with reason, make use of the word Fury, to denote the passion which men of letters have to transmit their names to posterity. Some have been guilty

* Montaigne's Essays, lib. i. cap. 15. p. 607.

of actions, almost as extraordinary, and, I may venture to say, almost as silly, and as criminal, as Erostratus. Where shall we read of a death more extravagant than that of Aristotle was, if what is said of it be true? And was it not the height of vanity, to desire that mankind should be inform'd he was not willing to live, because he could not comprehend a secret of nature? And that other philosopher, who threw himself into one of the pits of mount *Ætna*, and left his shoes on the brink of the precipice, that it might be known what kind of death he had chose; ought he not to be consider'd as a victim to the fury of immortalizing his name?

Have not the modern writers given as strong proofs as the antient, of their violent fondness for the glory of being transmitted to posterity? Vanini consented to be burnt alive rather than retract his abominable system. He thought that his followers wou'd have the less esteem for his works, if he did not maintain the absurd impieties of them, even to death. They tell a very particular story of him, which plainly shews the obstinacy and vanity of a learned man, careful how he says any thing that may diminish the reputation and weight of his writings. When he was bound to the stake, after some reflection on the torment he was going to suffer, he cry'd out, "Oh! God, what torture am I condemn'd to?" A priest who attended him to the scaffold, to exhort him to own the existence of the Divine Being, took hold of Vanini's exclamation, and said, "There is a God then, since you call upon him." "That's a way of speaking, reply'd the atheist, which is of no consequence." These were the last words he spoke; for the flames of the pile, which was lighted that instant, hinder'd him from uttering any more of his blasphemies †.

Other

† This account seems directly contradictory to what Morery reports, who says, that Vanini's tongue was cut out; which is true, how cou'd he speak when he was ty'd to the stake? To reconcile these different accounts, it must be suppos'd, that

Other learned men there have been, who, tho' not so vain as those I have mention'd, have, nevertheless, done things directly contrary to their repose and tranquility, because they hop'd they shou'd extend their names to immortality. How many are there that have suffer'd banishment, imprisonment, and the loss of all they had in the world, who might have avoided all those misfortunes, by suppressing their works, or by disowning them! They chose rather to lose all they had, and to groan under a harsh captivity, or banishment from their country, than to have their memories extinct.

That Greek bishop, who consented to be depriv'd of his bishopric rather than disown his being the author of the romance of Theagenes and Charicle, has been imitated by many in these latter ages. Arnaud Quefnel, St. Ciran, and many other writers, might have liv'd and dy'd in peace, if they had not meddled with the history of the times. If the solitary gentlemen of Port Royal had writ no more than the Mathurins, or if their books had been no better than those compos'd by the capuchins, they might still have enjoy'd their retirement; but their passion for immortalizing their name, and the jealousy, or hatred, which they had conceiv'd against the Jesuits, prov'd their total ruin.

Be the immoderate desire of glory ever so fatal to the generality of men of learning, they ought, dear Isaac, to have our pardon for the sake of the profit we reap from them. Since the emulation, with which

that Vanini talk'd at that rate a little before his tongue was cut-out; and that this was no sooner done but the pile was set on fire. Aaron Monceca, to whom I wrote at Constantinople for an explanation of this matter, return'd me for answer, that he had read the passage which he had reported, in a very good author, whose name he cou'd not recollect; and added that he remember'd the original terms of the conversation, "Ab Deus! Ergo est Deus," said the priest: "Modus est loquendi," reply'd Vanini. I wou'd willingly have suppress'd this passage, but after Aaron Monceca's answer, I thought fit to translate it just as it is.

they

they vie with one another, excites them to produce a thousand fine works, they are only to be pity'd for suffering ambition, instead of wisdom, to be the motive of what they do; and we must own, however, that we have obligations to the very vice which we condemn; for it supplies the want of virtue, and, without it, the sciences would languish.

If there are any faults to be forgiven, undoubtedly they must be those which so much act the part of wisdom, that it requires long speculation to perceive their imperfection. Besides, all the learned don't push the desire of glory, and the passion for being talk'd of, to extremity. In all the various states of life, in all the different professions, there are many people who carry things to the utmost period; and the case is generally the same with the men of learning. But some there are who curb their desires and wont suffer 'em to carry them beyond certain bounds. If it be true, that all are greedy of immortality; it is equally true, that they don't all employ the same means to attain to it; and that they are not willing to purchase it at the same price.

Farewell, dear Isaac, and live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXXV.

A commentary on a book intitl'd the history of Don Inigo of Guipuscoa, &c. by M. Hercules Rasiel de Selva; wherein the author draws a parallel between his hero and don Quixot.—The main drift of the writer is to banter ridiculous, superstitious Zealots.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris——

THE Nazarenes, dear Jacob, are the very first people to ridicule their monks, and their superstitious ceremonies. There are, every now-and-then, some sprightly bold genius's, who breaking thro' all restraint, hold out the torch of reason full in the eyes of the people; but the monks soon obscure

this transitory light, and none but philosophers make use of it, to fortify their minds against the attacks of superstition. I have been just reading a book of this character, written by a Nazarene, intitled, "The history of the admirable Don Inigo of Guipuscoa, a knight of the virgin, and founder of the monarchy of the Inighits, with a short account of the establishment and government of that formidable monarchy, by M. Hercules Rasiel De Selva †." 'Tis a lively and engaging picture of the surprizing and extraordinary actions of one of the chief heroes of the monastic state, and even of Nazarenism.

This man, whose name was Inigo, was a Spaniard; he was vain, proud and ignorant, as are most of his nation; a most obsequious lover, always ready to lose his life for the ladies, and to undertake the most extraordinary things in the world. And thus does the author of that work paint him, before his brains were quite turn'd by a fanatical devotion. These are the terms in which he speaks of him: "Glory and love were his prevailing passions. He could not imagine how a man of quality could live with honour without a great share of ambition, or be happy without gallantry. These two passions engrossed him in their turn. All the time that the campaign lasted he devoted to glory; and so eagerly did he pursue it, that he run the hazard of battles to obtain it. But while the troops were in their summer or winter quarters, he reposed himself, after the toils of Mars, in the arms of Venus."

That's the picture which the author draws of his knight-errant, which is the name that he gives him throughout his whole work; and he draws an exact parallel between don Inigo of Guipuscoa, and don Quixot de la Mancha. Perhaps, dear Jacob, thou wilt not be displeased to know the grounds this writer had to make so pleasant a comparison. He says in the first place, that the extravagancies of both the

† This book was printed at the Hague, in 2 volumes 8vo for the widow Levier.

knights-errant were intirely owing to reading. The Amadis depriv'd don Quixot de la Mancha of his senses, and spiritual romances had the same effect upon don Inigo de Guipuscoa. Having kept his bed so long upon account of a wound he received at a siege, that he was quite weary of it, a book was brought him in the Castilian language, says the writer of his pious follies, which had the title of the Saints Flower. "This sacred romance, abounding with marvellous stories, affected him almost as much at first, and afterwards much more than the books of chivalry, which till then had been his sole delight. He admired that rambling disposition of the saints errant, which made them travel from one end of the world to the other without any provision". Thus my dear Brito, thou hast a don Quixot in perfection, his very terms, phrases, expressions, ideas and sentiments.

The author too is every whit as unlucky in the method he takes to determine his hero to go in quest of his adventures. In one single passage he banters all those zealots heated by a superstitious devotion, whose ridiculous actions were looked upon as miracles, by the Nazarene vulgar, and preached up as examples of the sublimest sanctity by a whole croud of fanatical monks. "What's the matter, says the Knight-Errant, Don Inigo, that I who am of so robust a constitution, can't do what so many puny saints have done? Why can't I content myself, as St. Hilarian did, with only four figs a day after sun-set; or live, as St Appolonius did, upon nothing but raw herbs, as they are produced by the earth, without cultivation, the same which are browsed by the beasts? Why can't I sleep upon a stone without leaning on it, as well as St. Pacomius; or sit in the hollow trunk of a tree, encompassed with sharp stakes, as St. Zuirard; or even not lie down at all, like St. Dorothy the Theban? Why can't I make two hundred genuflections a day like St. Guingalois, pray three-hundred times a day like St. Paul the Anchoret, and like St. Polychron, say n y prayers with the root

of a great oak upon my shoulders? What! shall I, who have with so much constancy, suffered such cruel torture for the sake of wearing a tight boot of Spanish leather, refuse to suffer lesser evils for the sake of becoming a great saint? Sure, if one St. Daniel had the courage to imitate the admirable St. Simeon the Stylite, who stood day and night on the top of a column forty cubits high, what should hinder me to do the same? or at least like St. Baradat and St. Thalella, to bend myself quite double in a cage upon the point of a rock, or be suspended in the air? What shall prevent me from quenching the flames of concupiscence, by throwing myself naked amongst a swarm of flies, like St. Macaire of Alexandria, or, into a heap of briars and thorns like St. Benedict, or into water in the midst of winter, like St. Adhelmus and St. Ulfrie, or among ice and snow like the seraphic St. Francis? What hinders, in fine, that I should not give myself a thousand lashes a day with a rod as St. Anthelmus did, or even to imitate the great St. Dominic the Nasty, who gave himself three hundred thousand lashes a week, while he repeated a score of psalters? Was not their flesh of the same nature as mine, or shall my fervency and courage be less than theirs?

All these achievements of these pious errants, these rambling votaries, are the motives by which, according to the author, Don Inigo was determined to quit the world intirely, and embrace spiritual knight-errantry, motives which are at least as ridiculous as those which determined don Quixot.

Is there any thing in effect so ridiculous as to imagine, that the Deity delights to see the discipline exercis'd upon the nasty posteriors of the monks, or in the extravagancies of two or three hermits capering like Amadis on a desolate rock, or don Quixot on the Black Mountain? What blindness is this, dear Jacob! The more I reflect upon mankind in the general, the more senseless I think them, and the more to be pitied. There is no extravagance which they don't accommodate to the idea they form to themselves of the Deity; they stifle the natural light which

they have received, with a thousand chimera's, and by their fooleries they render the Deity whom they worship, almost as contemptible as the pagans render him ridiculous by their multiplicity of deities.

I don't think, dear Brito, that there's a greater absurdity in believing that a piece of wood or stone shares a ray of the divine essence, than to fancy that half a dozen scourges are enough to merit the protection of the almighty, eternal and supreme Being, and that heaven has any concern about the buttocks of a capuchin. But some Nazarenes will say, these lashes, these severities, mortify the lusts of the flesh. What! cannot the Nazarenes resist temptation without being obliged to do such extravagant things? Can't they turn aside their mind from evil, by no other means but stupifying it? I pity them for being so wicked, that they cannot be good, wise and virtuous, but by becoming impertinent and ridiculous fools. The philosophers, and even they whose system was the most opposite to the Divine Being, had no recourse to such extravagancies to refine their morals. Virtue appeared amiable enough of itself in their eyes to deserve their care in cultivating it. Epicurus, the chief of a sect so opposite to that of the Stoics, forced those Philosophers however to do justice to his merit, and to own that the sense of pleasure was very grave and insipid *. The most illustrious of the Nazarene doctors have themselves confessed, that they were charmed with the wisdom and temperance of Epicurus †; yet that Philosopher never submitted his back-side to be flay'd, and did not think

* Nec æstimatur voluptas illa Epicuri, ita enim mehercule sentio, cum sobria & sicca sit. Seneca de Vita Beata, cap. xiii.

† Epicurum accepturum fuisse palmam in animo meo, nisi ego credidissem post mortem restare animæ vitam & fructus meritorum, quod Epicurus credere noluit; i. e. I should be apt to adjudge the palm to Epicurus, if I did not believe the life of the soul after the death of the body, and the fruit of merit, which Epicurus would not believe. August. in Confess. lib. ii. cap. 16.

the scratching his flesh with briars was a means to become virtuous.

The passage I just now quoted to thee appears still more ridiculous from its resemblance to what we read in Michael de Cervantes, of the motive that determined don Quixot to make his first sally. I will transcribe it for thee, that thou may'st be the better able to judge which of the two were the most extravagant knights-errant, the temporal or the spiritual.

“Don Quixot used to say, that the Cid Ruy Dias was a very brave knight; but that there was no comparison between him and the knight of the flaming sword, who with a single back-stroke cut off two monstrous tall giants in the middle. Bernard de Carpio was in his graces, because in the plain of Roncesvalles he dispatched Orlando, as much enchanted as he was, having lifted him from the ground, and choak'd him in the air just as Hercules squeezed to death in his arms that prodigious son of the earth Antæus. He also spoke handsomely of the giant Morgan, who, though he was of that race of giants that was intolerably proud and brutish, was however civil and affable. But of all men in the world, he admired Rinaldo of Montalban, especially when he saw him sally out of his castle, and rob all he met; and then again, when in Barbary he carried away the idol of Mahomet, which was of massy gold, as the history says*.”

Thou seest, dear Jacob, that the parallel betwixt the hero of Guipuscoa and the hero of la Mancha is very just, and that the reasons which both had to embrace their condition of life were equally extravagant. Yet in process of time don Inigo far outstripped don Quixot, and notwithstanding all his follies, formed a powerful and awful society; for thou must know that don Inigo de Guipuscoa is no other than the famous Ignatius of Loyola, and that the monarchy of the Inighists is no other than that of the Jesuits, which is since become so formidable to all mankind.

* Don Quixot, book I.

The author gives a very curious account of its sudden and prodigious establishment in all parts of the world in three or four-score years time, and this too notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of the most potent and the most celebrated bodies. Without giving them ill language, he there paints to the life people whom every body pretends to talk of, without knowing them; as he does justice to their good qualities, so he does not spare to tell them their bad ones. Yet what he mentions of 'em is little more than what the Jesuits themselves have said of them. But by the form and turn that he gives to what he borrows from them, he evidently shews the ridiculousness of the pious follies of their hero, which they have affected to give out for miracles. He does not forget those especially that they wrought at his apotheosis, which exposed them as much to laughter as to public indignation. He artfully lays open their secret views, and the most hidden springs of their politics, and clearly discovers the inconveniencies of their morals. In a word, 'tis an exact picture of their maxims, and their conduct; and next to the famous Provincial Letters, I have read nothing so good or so well-written upon the subject.

As this book is privately handed about here, I should not have seen it, if it had not been for the chevalier de Masin. I know not what the reverend fathers will say to it when it comes more abroad; but sure I am, they will not say that it descended from heaven, as they affirmed of a certain book publish'd by their Inigo at a time when he was so ignorant, that when he was a student at Paris some years after, in the college of St. Barbe, he had like to have been whipped at thirty-three years old. This induced his disciples to affirm, that God had sent this mystic book, entitled, *Spiritual Exercises*, to Inigo by the angel Gabriel from heaven*. Though this is a conceit taken

* Lewis de Ponte, an unexceptionable author, relates in the life of father Baltasar Alvarez, cap. 43, that God revealed those exercises to our holy father, and that it was notified by Gabriel

taken from the Turks, and is the canal by which Mahomet affirmed that the Alcoran was deliver'd to him, yet the Jesuits have not scrupled to make use of it; for finding it fit to serve their turns, they thought there was no harm in making the archangel Gabrieltake t'other journey to the earth; though this celestial messenger cannot be pleased at his being thus made a hawker of very bad books. This being so, I wonder that they did not make him also the carrier of the Life of Maria Alacoque, and of the truth of the miracles of the Abbe Paris demonstrated, which are not inferior to any of the kind.

Fare thee well, dear Brito; live content and happy, and let us always make merry with the follies of our persecutors.

L E T T E R LXXXVI.

Jacob Brito's opinion concerning the art of physic; he asserts there are but six remedies in physic.— Character of the physicians at Montpellier.— The youth of that country train'd up to manly exercises, for which prizes are given on certain days to those who excel.— Such kind of sports considered in a political light.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Montpellier.—

I Promised thee, dear Monceca, in my last, some account of the physicans of this city, whose reputation is very great. After several conversations with some of the most able men of the faculty, I am still of the same opinion which I held at Constantinople, though I remember thou didst not seem to approve of it.

Of all the arts, physic is the most uncertain, If they who apply to it, did not study anatomy, and

Gabriel the archangel of all the world, on the part of the virgin mother of God, that she was their patroness, foundress and supporter, and had taught Ignatius to think so too. *Sotwell Bibliotheca Societat. Jesu, p. 1.*

some

some other sciences relating to the practice of a surgeon, I'll maintain it, that a man might in three days commence a physician, and know all the great secrets of this dangerous art. 'Tis true, that long experience, and frequent visits of the sick, convey some ideas of certain symptoms, by which a physician may improve ; but till he has killed a good number of patients, he cannot cure one ; so that a physician must only be considered as one that has just taken his degree of doctor : and viewing him in this light, I believe that three days study will be sufficient to acquaint him with the chief secrets of his profession.

There are but six remedies in physic ; and all the several names by which they are called, only denote their different compositions, or their stronger or weaker preparation, which still amounts however to the same thing. This, therefore, dear Monceca, is the whole system of physic ; Mercury for venereal maladies ; sulphur for external disorders of the skin ; ipecacuana for dysenteries ; the emetic for distempers that require a strong evacuation ; the quinquina or Jesuits bark for fevers ; rhubarb, senna, and cassia, for slight purges. Bleeding is as much the surgeon's province as the physician's. To the knowledge of these remedies all the doctors in the universe reduce the whole of their science. Indeed they sometimes invent certain drugs, and new compounds ; but they are always obliged to return to the first principles that are known and practised by the meanest apothecaries in the kingdom, who cure as many patients as the physicians at Montpellier do, and perhaps kill not near so many. At least, 'tis certain, that there die more people in proportion in the cities, than in the villages ; and that there's not a city in Europe where there are fewer old men or women than at Montpellier.

Nevertheless, I am not willing to rob the learned doctors of this city of any reputation which they have justly acquired ; for I look upon them as learned physicians, and great anatomists : This enables men for the cure of the stone, fistula's and in short all distempers, wherein the hand is capable of restoring health

health to the body. As to known subjects, the physicians of this country have an infinite advantage over others. But when internal disorders are to be cured, the sources of which are hidden, as fevers, dysenteries, pains of the head, &c. they are no more than country apothecaries; mercury, ipecacuana, bleeding. And if the patient does not recover more Mercury, more ipecacuan, and more bleeding. Seignare, purgare, clisterifare; & si maladia, opiniatria non vult se guarire, reseignare, repurgare, reclisterifare*. Let the advocates of physic be ever so much offended at these jokes, the whole of it is reducible to the remedies which all mankind knows. If a physician of Montpellier has any small advantage over a country barber, it must be in such cases, where the maladies which he is called to, are curable by remedies applied immediately, and where the hand itself can be laid upon the part affected. Then the knowledge of physic and of anatomy renders the hopes of a cure in a manner certain.

I can hardly forbear thinking of the science of the physicians as the philosophers do of matter, upon which matter alone is capable of acting: So the former can't hope to cure the parts of the human body, but when they can act upon them immediately; as soon as they have recourse to foreign helps, they are no better than the meanest apothecaries. I talked to several learned physicians with the same freedom as I write to thee. They did not indeed agree in every thing that I said to them; for they maintained, that experience made amends for the incapacity of knowing and seeing what passed in the human body. But they owned, that this experience was extremely difficult to acquire, and that the first patients that fell under the management of a physician were in a very dangerous crisis. Thou knowest what they say of the physicians. They think they are justified in trying projects upon the unfortunate poor people, to gain, experience for the benefit of the rich. To be sure

* Moliere in his *Malad Imaginaire*.

dear Monceca, thou hast heard the story of a scholar that was carried sick to an hospital, where he heard three physicians debating in Latin, whether they should not try the success of a remedy upon him, that was enough to give him his death. One of those doctors actually said they ought not to be careful of such a vile creature. 'Twas happy for the sick man, that he understood Latin. He made use of that knowledge to reproach them in a pathetic manner for their pernicious design*, and his learning was of service to him ; for as soon as his physicians perceived it, they treated him with a great deal of regard, took vast care of him, and deliver'd him out of the sad condition in which they found him. May the God of our fathers dear Monceca, keep us out of the hands of such people and preserve us in health, which of all enjoyments is the most precious !

They have a custom in this country, which I hold to be very proper to keep the body in health and activity. The youth are trained up to several exercises, which promote a great perspiration, and make the blood circulate freely. All the inhabitants of these provinces in general seem to be fond of those sports which require strength and agility of body ; and upon certain days of the year they give prizes to those who perform best at those public exercises, in which they imitate the example of the antient Greeks and Romans. Two or three days ago I was at one of those entertainments, where I saw some young fellows wrestling. The victor's prize was a silk scarf, with a silver fringe, which he received from the chief echevin of the city. The prize for running was richer than that for wrestling ; for it consisted of a piece

* *Faciamus experimentum in anima vili. Responsio. Apellat animam vilem, pro qua Christus passus est mori ? i. e. Let us make an experiment on this vile creature. Answer. Dost thou call that a vile creature, for whom Christ suffered death ? Thus the story is told : But Jacob Brito was not so particular, because he would avoid the mention of the name Jesus Christ, which the Jews, who are hardened in their blindness, don't care to repeat.*

of plate curiously chased. I was charmed to see this slight image of the antient festivals of Greece, and highly approved of the prudent customs of these provinces, in encouraging their people to inure themselves to fatigue, and to preserve and increase their strength by rewards of which the distribution becomes so beneficial to the state.

If we inquire, dear Monceca, into the origin of the games and pomps of antient Greece, we shall soon perceive that they were as much owing to state-policy, as to the spirit of religion, and the love of shew. "They had a mind," says a French writer* "to bring together into one place, and to unite together by common sacrifices, different people, who were all independent, and generally more remote from one another in point of interest than of space." The pleasures of those feasts, to which all the people of Greece flocked, cemented their affections, stifled quarrels, and drowned hatred and division; and they excited a noble emulation without stirring up envy. These pastimes served as a school. in which the body was accustomed betimes to military fatigues. Running, wrestling, and the use of the cestus, did in some sort resemble military exercises; and in a time of peace every Grecian served his apprenticeship to war.

The French had entertainments heretofore, which were almost as magnificent as the antient Olympic games. Their justs, at which the kings and princes were very often present, made a noble shew. The nobility, who were greedy of fame, exercised themselves betimes, in order to distinguish themselves in those famous tournaments, wherein the victor used to receive his reward from the hands of his sovereign. But the fatal accident, which happened to Henry II. who was killed at one of those entertainments by a lance that penetrated his eye, caused those tournaments to be quite cried down, and the use of them

* The Works of Toureil, Tom. II. Pref. Hist. p. 17.

was soon after abolished, though it was in part owing also to the state policy which suppressed duels that deprived the kingdom of its bravest subjects. There was a resolution formed to banish every thing that had the appearance of a single combat, in order to accustom the French the more easily to exert their bravery for the service of their king and country, and not that alone.

The almost continual wars which the French have been engaged in, have prevented them from perceiving how useful it is in time of peace to breed up the nobility in customs that reconcile them to arms. They have, on the other hand, erected several useful establishments in the room of those tournaments. The academies, the companies of musketeers, and the king's household, are schools to form the young nobility, though I think there are not honorary rewards enough to encourage them. In a state so polite as France, there ought to be every year a certain number of prizes appropriated to military exercises, as there are for the sciences. I could wish that the body of engineers had some such encouragement, and that some prize were to be distributed to every regiment; that the officer who was most skilled in military evolutions, or the engineer who was most versed in the science of fortifications, might receive the reward of their merit at the head of their companies. Were but a crown of olives to be conferred upon them, and an idea of honour to accompany it, what would not they do to deserve it? A red or a blue ribbon has nothing very substantial; yet what don't men undertake to obtain it? Rewards of this sort encourage people, keep their minds in constant exercise, excite them to virtue, revive the desire of glory in all hearts, and cost the state nothing.

How happy would it be for subjects, if the sovereigns only rewarded those of superior merit! How many pensions would be suppressed, and return into their treasury! What opportunities would they not have to ease their subjects, and to lessen their taxes! How many women, lawyers and courtiers, would

leave off those extravagant expences, which the widow, the orphan, and the peasant, are commonly oblig'd to pay !

The wise and prudent ministry of France has endeavoured to obviate the abuse of pensions. Formerly it was enough to have a friend at the king's ear to obtain any request : But now it must be merit. I often hear some Frenchmen cry out, and declaim against this wise conduct of the ministry. But they who argue rationally, and judge without passion, commend a prudence which tends to the welfare of the state, and to ease the people, who are already overwhelmed by the calamity of the times.

Be the conduct ever so wise, or the care taken in the management of public affairs ever so great, 'tis impossible to please every body. People are so whimsical, and so different are their sentiments, that it would be madness to go about to satisfy every individual. We ought strictly to follow what reason dictates to us, and then we have nothing more to do than to laugh at vain and ridiculous criticisms.

Farewell, dear Monceca. As soon as I arrive in Spain, thou shalt hear from me.

L E T T E R LXXXVII.

Some philosophical discussions relating to a vacuum and the infinity of matter.—The sentiments of different philosophers on the subject.—The folly of neglecting the study of useful sciences, for such as are intricate and useless, condemned.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Paris.——

I Shew'd thy last letter to some Natural Philosophers of my acquaintance, who declare themselves very much of thy opinion as to the uncertainty of that part of the medicinal art which may be look'd upon as an occult science, and cannot be known without making some experiments which are often deceitful.

The

The learned gentlemen, whom I am speaking of, are very capable of deciding where lies the real merit of the several parts of physics, and have with infinite pains studied and examined all the most secret labyrinths of that science. They divide it into two parts, the one uncertain, full of doubts and questions that are not to be resolv'd ; the other agreeable, and always inlightened by the torch of truth. This last relates to experimental philosophy, the other to the general principles of the science, and to the first operators of nature, if we may so call those corpuscles, which by their various assembling together constitute all the different beings that are in the universe.

This part of Natural Philosophy may be reduc'd to two points solely, which include all the others, and make it necessary to examine and discuss them, viz. a Vacuum, and Infinity. The man that could clear up these two questions, would render the first part of Natural Philosophy as clear and as certain as the second. But 'tis my opinion, that as long as there are men left in the world, there will be perpetual disputes concerning the different opinions for denying or admitting Infinity, and for maintaining or condemning a Vacuum ; and we shall be no wiser upon this article two thousand years hence than we are now, and the disputes of future ages will give no more light into it than those of the past. The mind of man, being limited, cannot rise to the knowlvdge of certain things above his sphere. Of what use then are those eternal discussions which end in nothing at last ? 'Tis my opinion, dear Brito, that one ought to apply to the study of certain sciences in the same manner as to the reading of romances, viz. to look into them for mere amusement, and to consider them only as pleasant dreams. This is the way to shorten a great many needless disputes which do but confine the mind to subjects that are commonly of no use to it, and which it cannot rationally hope to comprehend. Of this kind are the questions that treat of infinity ; for our finite understanding is lost and bewildered in infinity, which produces a chaos of ideas contrary to one

another, betwixt which the mind remains in such a doubt and confusion as hinder it from being ever able to determine itself with any appearance of truth.

The antient philosophers disputed concerning infinity, and probable reasons were urged on both sides. But it is a question so full of difficulties, that when the mind seeks to dive to the bottom of it, 'tis always stopped by objections of its own raising; so that to study such points is only to learn to doubt*. In order to be convinc'd of the truth of my opinion, it is sufficient to examine the various systems of the philosophers, which, how different soever they may appear, are reducible to two only, viz. to the Epicureans and Peripatetics among the antients, and to the Gassendists and Cartesians among the moderns. And as to certain questions, the sentiments of these four sects may again be reduc'd to two particular opinions, one which admits a vacuum, limits matter, and only thinks it divisible to a certain degree; the other, which denies any vacuum whatsoever, admits of infinity or indefinity of matter, and holds, that 'tis divisible ad Infinitum. In examining these questions one runs through all that part of physics which I believe will eternally remain doubtful.

Let us hear an Epicurean, or rather a Gassendist, speaking of the vacuum.

A Void is Space Intangible : Thus prov'd ;
 For, were there none, no Body could be mov'd.
 Because, where-e'er the passing motions goes,
 It still must meet with stops, still meet with foes :
 'Tis natural to Bodies to oppose. }
 So that to move would be in vain to try ;
 But all would fixt, stubborn, and moveless lie ;
 Because no yielding Body could be found,
 Which first should move, and give the other ground.
 But ev'ry one now sees that things do move
 With vaious turns, in earth, and Heav'n above :
 Which were no Void, not only we'd not seen.
 But Bodies too themselves had never been ;

* See the book, intitl'd, La Philosophie du bon Sens.

Ne'er gen'rated; for matter, all sides prest
With other Matter, would for ever rest*.

The Gassendist continues †:

But some object: The floods to fish give way,
Who cut their passage thro' the yielding sea;
Because they leave a Space, where-e're they go,
To which the yielding waters circling flow:
And hence by an analogy they prove,
That tho' the World were full, yet things may move.
But this is weak.

For how could fish e'er ply their nat'ral oars,
How cut the sea and visit distant shores,
Unless the waves gave way? How these divide,
Except the fish first part the yielding tide?
Therefore fight sense, deny what that will prove,
Discard all Motion, and the pow'r to shove,
Or grant a Void, whence things begin to move. }

These arguments appear to be good and substantial; but when the Peripatetic and the Cartesian ask if it be possible to maintain the existence of a being which in reality is a mere nothing, the mind is immediately hampered by this first difficulty. For by endeavouring to fathom it, a man quickly forgets the reasons that convinced him of a vacuum, and he cannot persuade himself to admit a pure negation, a nothing, for any thing solid, but remains under an eternal uncertainty †.

Proceed we now, dear Brito, from the question of the vacuum, to that of the infinity of matter. There-

* — Locus est intactus Inane vacansque: &c.

Lucretius de Rerum Natura, lib. 1. Of which the translation in the text is by Mr. Creech.

† Lucretius ut supra.

† PROPOSITIO III.

Repugnat ut detur vacuum.

Demonstratio.

Per Vacuum intelligitur Extensio sine Substantia Corporea. Corpus sine Corpore, quod est absurdum. Renati Cartesii Principiorum Philosophiæ, Part I. & II. More Geometrico demonstratæ per Benedictum de Spinoza. Part II. p. 48.

must be void spaces beyond the world, says a Gassendist, and he gives two material reasons for it. "Suppose, says he, that you were situate at the world's end, and that you extended your arm; either your arm will be stopp'd, and then that which stops it must be something beyond the verge of the world; or the arm will have the power of extending itself, which denotes, by consequence, that there must be a space beyond the utmost part. It must therefore be confess'd, that there are spaces void of bodies beyond the world, or maintained that matter is infinite, which is not only absurd, but even impious and sacrilegious; for there cannot be two infinities. He that uses the term Infinite, says a thing which comprehends every thing; and if matter were infinite, it would be God. This opinion is really abominable; and, as to the pretence which the Cartesians have taken from Chrysippus, and their ambiguous term of Indefinity, they are mere child's play, unworthy of the candour and sincerity of a philosopher. Is it not a joke to assert that matter is neither Finite nor Infinite, but that it is indefinite? Were I to ask a Norman how many crowns he had in his pocket, and he should tell me, that they are neither even nor odd, but partly one and t'other, I should like the answer every whit as well."

These are the arguments of the Gassendists. They strike the imagination, and carry the appearance of conviction. But the same difficulty which occurs against the notion of small vacuums diffus'd in the world, stands good for those imaginary spaces beyond the world. The mind cannot digest an extension that is penetrable, nor comprehend that a thing can exist, and have extension, without having parts. Where-ever there is extension, there is always matter. There cannot be space therefore without matter; and whatsoever limits I prescribe to the world, my mind still conceives new spaces beyond it. Therefore matter must needs be infinite.

Consider, dear Brito, how obscure this question is, and what an impenetrable cloud has concealed the truth of it for ever from the eyes of mankind.

As

As it is impossible for them to know the finite bounds of matter; or its infinity, the divisibility of that same matter is another secret of which they will be eternally ignorant. How can it be conceived, on the one hand, that in the foot of a gnat there are as many parts as there are in the whole world? For, if matter be divisible ad infinitum, there is an infinite number of parts in the smallest atom, as well as in the whole world. This is shocking to reason, and yet it is a better argument than that which is made use of by the Epicureans and the Gassendists, when they say, That an atom is only indivisible with regard to the inflexible nature of its essence which admits of no vacuum. This argument is a *Petitio Principii*; for when the possibility of a vacuum is deny'd, the atom then becomes divisible. It is my opinion, dear Brito, that without having recourse to the pretended inflexibleness and solidity of atoms, it is impossible to imagine that a foot of a fly can be divided into an infinite number of parts*.

In the very endeavour to reconcile the idea of infinity with matter, the mind is bewildered in its conceptions; nevertheless the argument of the Cartesians shocks all those of their adversaries. "Be an atom ever so little, say they, the part which is towards the east, is not the same as that which turns towards the west. These two parts, therefore, may be divided. But as these parts are divided, they are both for the same reason capable of being subdivided. Consequently the thing will be multiply'd ad infinitum; and as long as there is matter, there will be two sides." When the argument is carry'd thus far, the mind starts again; and, sincerely speaking, it must be confess'd, that the most ignorant in these matters

* Spinoza has set the strongest objection of the sticklers for the indivisibility of atoms in all its force. See R. Cartesii Princip. Philosoph. Pars I. & II. More Geometrico demonstr. per Bened. de Spinoza, Part. II. p. 50 & 51.

An ingenious man and a good philosopher has given a very judicious answer to this argument of Descartes, of the truth of which Spinoza seems so strongly persuaded. See Des Cœnture's Remarks upon Lucretius, tom. i. p. 348.

know as much as the most learned. A philosopher ought to declare, concerning all these questions, what Cicero did, speaking of the various sentiments concerning the nature of the soul: "Some Deity will decide which of these different opinions is the true *." It is the Divinity alone, dear Brito, that can know these hidden mysteries. It has been his pleasure that we should be ignorant of them. Why should we attempt, in vain, to discover them? The advantage that we should reap from it, is really not worth the trouble we give ourselves. Of what importance is it for us to know whether matter be divisible ad infinitum, provided that we know that it is divisible to such a point as is sufficient for all the necessities we want? Mankind, always ready to give attention to things which favour of the extraordinary and the marvellous, has been at infinite labour for near three thousand years, to clear up questions that are not to be resolv'd; and they really ought to be taken off from so unprofitable a study as makes them lose that time which might be employed to much better advantage. But the common cause which engages most people in wrong studies, is, their having annexed the idea of science to such knowledge as is vain and useless; and so blinded are they by their prejudices, that they have preferred the superficial sciences to those which are solid and necessary. "When a man, says a Nazarene Philosopher †, takes it into his head to become learned, and when he is once fired with an ambition to be an universal scholar, he hardly ever examines what sciences are most necessary for him, either for his behaviour as an honest man, or for the conviction of his reason; but he only looks upon those who pass in the world for learned men, and upon what there is in them which renders them considerable." This is the very thing that makes young men in love with impertinent and useless studies: They

* *Hasum sententiarum quæ vera sit, Deus aliquis viderit.* Cicero.

† Mallebranche's Search after Truth. Lib. III. Part I. Chap. iv. p. 84.

bring several dangerous prejudices home with them from the college. They have been made to believe, that their tutor, a school-philosopher, a prodigious admirer of chimeras, was a great man; and they think they cannot do better than to follow his pattern.

Farewell, dear Brito; live content and happy; may God abundantly prosper thee.

L E T T E R LXXXVIII.

An account of the Mystic Sect, and its Directors.—

The principles of the Mystic Religion.—Names of its saints and chief leaders.—Titles of some books wrote by the adherents of that sect.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris——

PARIS is a place, dear Isaac, one cannot leave without regret; but, as loth as I am to go from it, this probably is the last letter I shall write to thee from this city; for, I shall be going in three or four days for Lisle in Flanders, and from thence I shall proceed to Brussels. The new countries which I shall see will supply me with ample matter for new reflections, which I shall communicate to thee very punctually.

In the letters which I have wrote to thee from Paris, I have endeavoured to give thee the most exact account that I could of the manners and customs of its inhabitants. Thou must have made such an acquaintance, by thy travels to the courts of Germany, that, to be sure, thou canst with ease supply what I may have forgot, or not sufficiently explained to thee: However, I think I have left out nothing material. I have given thee an account of the courtiers, ministers, lawyers, burghers, scholars, ecclesiastics, and the common people; and when I have talk'd to thee of the spiritual directors, and their votaries, I think I shall not have omitted any one class whatever.

The

The Mystic Class forms a sort of separate republic in France, which has its particular laws, usages and customs. They that are the chief and the most respected of this class are called Directors, who are they that settle and order every thing that ought to be done, who have absolute power in their own hands; and tho' they are in some sort obliged in certain cases, to have recourse to the pontiffs, commonly dispense themselves from it, and decide the most important questions without appeal.

The Mystic Sect is much more numerous in women than in men. I propose to give thee an account chiefly of the Directors; the rest consisting of nuns, old widows, superannuated wives, and young women, who, tho' they are not shut up in monasteries, yet renounce marriage. They are call'd Sisters, and are of several sorts; The chief are the sisters of the Third Order, the sisters of the Rosary, the sisters of the Scapulary, the sisters of St. Dominic, the sisters of the Cord of St. Francis, &c. These are all distinguished by a different habit. Those of the Scapulary have a grey gown, and a black petticoat. Those of the Third Order are, on the contrary, dressed half black and half white. All these sisterhoods are under the command of certain monks, who are admitted their Directors. There's great contention among the friars for this post; for thou need'st not to be told, dear Isaac, how much pleasanter it is to be at the head of a battalion of young women, than to have the command of a parcel of old wives, and decrepid widows. The states of the mystic nation may therefore be divided into three different classes. The first is compos'd of the directors of the girls; the second of those who have the charge of the widows, in which number there are always some whole charms are not all faded: And the third consists of those who are at the head of the old wives. This is an inconvenient, troublesome and disagreeable office; but there is no attaining to the other two without first serving in this. The Directors, who have

the care of the old wives, must not expect to see any tender, frisky lamb among their old ewes.

Whoever enters into the Mystic Sect must absolutely renounce all the pleasures of the marry'd state. Widows and maids are authorized, by their condition, to become members of it without examination ; but a marry'd woman must promise to forget all the joys of Hymen. There are few young wives that can prevail upon themselves to enter into the holy sisterhood upon that condition. And such as would put such a constraint on themselves, are hindered from it by their husbands, who are not for keeping that rigorous fast which is enjoined by the mystic religion.

This sect has its particular saints as well as customs: One Doniinic, a noted persecutor, who instituted the monstrous tribunal of the inquisition, is one of its chief Deities : The next in order to him, are Clara and Rose, two nuns ; and Francis de Sales is in the fourth rank among those patrons of mysticity. These men and women, in their life time, published several books full of the maxims of their faith. A nun, named Theresa, has left a complete collection of all the follies of her distemper'd brain, and disturbed imagination, which book passes for an inestimable piece, and is held in as great veneration by the Mystics, as the Alcoran is by the Mahometans.

The Mystic Religion, which is commonly the introduction to Quietism, is an opinion said to be derived from the eastern monks. It holds, that as soon as an immediate and intimate union is formed with the Divinity, a meer passive and inanimate contemplation supplies the place of all the virtues. This opinion authorises the greatest irregularities, overthrows good-manners, and renders all actions indifferent. Nevertheless, as the directors find their account in it, there's hardly one of them but inclines to it secretly, tho' they are obliged to constrain themselves, and to keep silence, for fear of animating the zeal of the magistrates, who watch all opportunities to root out this doctrine, which the monks reveal to such of their votaries

votaries only as they have chosen by way of preference to enable them to put the precepts of Quietism in practice.

Thou perceivest, dear Isaac, that there's nothing so commodious as a religion that permits the body the use of all prohibited pleasures, provided the mind is elevated at the same time to Heaven; a doctrine so whimsical and monstrous, that none but monks are capable of establishing it! If every day did not furnish proofs that this pernicious opinion has but too many adherents, one would take it to be one of those chimeras which the divines invent sometimes merely for the pleasure of opposing them. Yet true it is, that the Quietists are only charged with those opinions. The person who proved of most credit to them was one Michael Molinos. He composed two pieces, one intitled, *The Spiritual Guide*, and the other, *The Particular Communion*. In the very midst of Rome, nay, often in the places set apart for religious exercises, he and his adherents rendered this system fatal to many a husband at Rome; and Molinos, with his heart in Heaven, made many a cuckold upon earth. In fine, the jealous Italians awaked out of that lethargy in which the public exhortations and discourses, and the seeming life of this hypocritical doctor had plunged them. He was anathemised, and condemned for his life to a prison, in which he died. This was all the punishment the inquisition inflicted upon him, tho' it had caus'd a man to be burnt for doubting the truth of the massacre of the 11000 virgins, or the great virtue of indulgences. But the tribunal did not think the crime of Molinos was considerable enough, he having scarce got more bastards in all his pious extacies, than honest king Charles the Magna had formerly, who, nevertheless merited canonization by it.

The error of this doctor, so agreeable to corrupt hearts, is the practice of many of the mystic directors, especially of those of the first class; and there are many sisters of the scapulary, and the rosary who, having renounced marriage to embrace a pure

and more perfect state, taste all the pleasures of love, in order to promote their advancement to that state of perfection.

The chief books that contain this commodious doctrine, are, 1. Mental Prayer, compos'd by a Barnabite, one of the most sanctify'd, and most vigorous monks, that ever was in the Nazarene religion.

2. A short and easy method of prayer; and the song and songs of Solomon interpreted according to the mystic construction; two pieces of dame Guyon, a most staunch Molinist, who compos'd them after a tedious exercise, by which she had familiarly acquainted herself with the custom of solacing her body upon earth, and exercising her mind at the same time in heaven.

3. The collection of the reverend father Girard's letters, containing an abridgment of the most crafty maxims of Quietism, for the use of the damsels Guyot, Batarelle, Lione, and especially the sister Cadiere, his favourite penitent; with a collection of instructive sentences tending to perfection. To this book is added a Philosophical Commentary, by the same reverend father, upon those famous words, Abandonnez vous, et laissez faire; i. e. lie still, and be passive.

4. The advice of father Sabbatier, a confidant of the illustrious father Girard, for the use of the mystic directors, a work in which the young directors are taught the necessary expedients for avoiding the consequences that may happen from the indiscretion of the reverend sisters associated to sublime quietism §.

Those, dear Isaac, are the chief writings that are the continual meditation of such as are initiated in the Molinists sect, to which there's no admission but by passing thro' the mystic; for the latter's a sort of

§ The latter piece was never publish'd, and is probably an invention of Aaron Monceca for the jest sake; at least this is the opinion of the marquiss by whom these letters were translated from the original language into the French.

feminary to the other, and has its visions, trances, miracles, and pleasing contemplations like the Molinists, but does not admit of the separation of the actions of the body and the soul.

The pontiffs † are very watchful against the spreading of such dangerous opinions; they severely condemn Molinism, and don't much like those that give into the mystic ideas. They wou'd fain have the Nazarene religion exercised in its purity, and watch the clergy, with whom they trust the direction of the people; but they take care almost to no manner of purpose. 'Tis not the secular priests that cause a disorder in the popish faith. They are generally a good sort of people, as I have already told thee, and their manners are intirely the reverse of the behaviour of the monks. The curates, which is the name that the French give to the clergy who have a particular quarter to take care of, are commonly charitable to the poor, and careful to relieve families. They assist the orphan, protect the widow, keep up an union among kindred, decide quarrels, and in short are really the fathers of the people under their care. Some of the bishops act with the same prudence and wisdom. I don't understand, therefore, how the French come to be so silly, when they have such honest men among them for their priests, to suffer among them, and to maintain a parcel of drones, knaves, and debauchees, who, in one moment, destroy all that the others have taken so much pains to establish.

What I am going to say to thee, will, perhaps, appear to thee as a paradox; yet 'tis never the less true. "The Monks, in France are hated by the great men, despis'd by the clergy, ill-belov'd by the common people;" yet they find a way to get more credit and wealth than any body in the kingdom. I have taken a great deal of pains to find out what may be the occasion of it, and am apt to think, that the different opinions into which the kingdom has been divided

† The bishops.

as to several articles of the Nazarene faith, have not a little contributed to the support of the monks. Before the reformed were banish'd from France, the Nazarene papists protected the monks in spite of their adversaries. Jansenism succeeding in the place of Calvinism, the monks split into parties, each maintaining its own adherents; and really, if the monks are good for any thing, 'tis to foment division. This is, I think, what has preserv'd the monks in France, tho', perhaps, some day or other, when the French have been made sensible of the mischiefs which they are the authors of, they will be so wise as to send them out of the kingdom.

Farewell, dear Isaac, live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXXIX.

Some quotations from the Alcoran; with observations thereon.—The Talmud of the rabbies considered as much more ridiculous than the Alcoran.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo—

THY last letter but one gave me infinite pleasure. 'Tis impossible to argue more consequentially. Thy ideas are clear and distinct, and it were to be wish'd that a great many questions, which are rather obscur'd than illustrated, were handled in the same manner.

Most of the authors who have wrote upon abstracted matters, have even made them more difficult, by perplexing and confounding them. Commentators are generally apt to embarrass the text so much, that there's no coming at the true sense of the original which they have been at work upon. And sometimes an author, good enough in himself, becomes despicable by reason of the blunders and absurdities of his commentators.

I am at this very time reading a book, for which the Nazarenes, and our brethren the Jews, have af-

fected a great contempt; yet it contains excellent things, full of piety, and such as have a tendency to give the mind a great idea of the power of God. This Book is the Alcoran, written in its primitive language without any commentary, and 'twas given me by an Arabian. I know that the book has errors in it, which are contrary to the books that are left us by our prophets: But setting aside certain principles of religion, and considering the Alcoran only as the system of a philosopher, I think it deserves the esteem of good men, and is useful for the correction of manners.— There is not a philosopher, I don't except even the most learned among the moderns, that has given more convincing proofs of the existence, and the immense power of the Deity, than Mahomet. Hear how he explains himself in the chapter of mercy, where he makes the Deity say, "We have created you all. If you don't believe it, consider all the things which you enjoy. Did you create them yourselves? We have appointed that you should die. We can if it so pleaseth us, put other creatures like to you in your place, and metamorphose you into another figure which you know not. We have caused the soul to enter into your bodies. If you don't attend to this, only consider your tillage; do you cause the earth to produce its fruits, or do I? If I please, I will make your fields dry as stubble without corn: And yet you are proud, and and you say, What! shall our corn that we have sown be lost? No, surely, we will save it. Silly creatures! How can you talk at this rate? Lift up your eyes to heaven. Consider the water that falls from it, and serves to quench your thirst. Do you cause it to descend from the clouds, or do we? If it pleaseth us, it shall not fall at all; or we will cause it to come down in such a manner, that it shall be of no service, either to fructify your fields, or to quench your thirst*."

* Mahomet's Alcoran, translated out of the Arabic into French, by M. du Ryer, p. 112.

Now I ask thee, dear Monceca, what thou think'st of this passage? What a majesty there is in it! What grand ideas does it not offer to the imagination! How sublime is his representation of the immense power of the Deity, after having plainly prov'd his existence by these few words! "We have created you all. If you don't believe it, consider all the good things you enjoy. Did you create them yourselves?" This is the most invincible argument of the necessity of the Divine Being; because we know there was a time when we did not exist, we are under a necessity of looking backwards to one eternal cause, to one supreme Being, which having produc'd all beings, maintains them in the order wherein we see them. This regulation, so beautiful, and so wise, is a perpetual proof of the existence of the Deity: 'Tis a convincing argument, incessantly before our eyes, which we cannot open without beholding the extraordinary works form'd by this Almighty Being; and, when we shut them, we contemplate them no less with the eye of our mind. Even this tells us, that such a thinking intelligent Being cou'd not be the consequence of a principle, ignorant, and acting without knowledge. Consequently, the majesty and existence of the Divine Being makes itself known to the blind, as well as to those that have eyes to see: For, as soon as a man exists, he has the means and capacity of knowing it; because he thinks, and is capable of reflecting upon his thought.

But tho' men have the happiness to be able to advance themselves to the knowledge of a God, they ought not, therefore, to pretend to penetrate into the secrets which he has been pleas'd to conceal from our sight.—'Tis absurd for finite creatures to pretend to know the attributes and qualities of the infinite Being to perfection. How ridiculous is it for the creature to pretend to aspire to the creator, and to match itself with him! The knowledge which we have of the Divine Being, is the chief motive that ought to determine our obedience. There is nothing more senseless than to endeavour to limit the power of

God, and to think that a thing cannot be, because we do not comprehend how 'tis possible for it to be. That's the source of the various errors that spring up in all religions. Let us see, dear Monceca, how Mahomet confutes the unbelievers who offer to set bounds to the celestial power, and deny the possibility of the resurrection of the body. What! say the wicked, shall we die, shall we be dust, and shall we return to the world? This is a change very remote! "And why shall they not rise again? Don't they see the firmament over their heads, how we have formed it, how we have adorn'd it, and that there is no fault in it? We have stretch'd out the earth, cast up the mountains, and have caus'd all manner of fruits to be produced as a sign of our Almighty power. We have sent down the rain from Heaven, and have thereby caused the gardens to produce corn agreeable to the reaper, and palm-trees some higher than others to enrich our creatures. We have given life to the dead, dry, and barren ground. Thus shall the dead rise from the grave*."

All the systems of philosophy cannot convey a more majestic idea of the power of the Divine Being. He, who out of dry, barren earth, form'd man, can undoubtedly raise him from the grave: 'Tis not more difficult for the Divine Being to order matter to join itself again together, than it was for him to animate it, and put it in motion. He who made all things out of nothing, cannot he do whatever he will? Is there any thing that is more repugnant to our frail reason, than to think that something can be made out of nothing! Yet, not only religion, but sound philosophy, tells us, that matter must have been created by God. For if it was co-eternal with God, it would be independant of him, because it would not owe its creation to him, and he could not destroy it. In that case, God would not be omnipotent, and there would then be a Being as antient as he, which would not be dependent on him. The Divinity

* Alcoran. in the chapter de Re Judicate, p. 308.

would then be no longer infinite, but would be limited in his power, whereas the Infinite Being ought to be infinite in all his attributes. Matter would in that case be a rival divinity to the former. What absurdities follow from a system which admits the co-eternity of matter with God! If a man makes use of his reason, he must own that God has created all Beings out of nothing. But can we comprehend this mystery? No, surely. Why then should we offer to limit the power of God in other things, since there is nothing which his power cannot easily execute, since it has been able to produce all things from nothing? "The supreme Being, says Mahomet, knows those that are unjust. He has the keys of futurity in his power. No one knows it but he. He knows every thing that is in the earth, and in the sea. He knows the number of leaves that fall from the trees, and the number of atoms that are in the darkness of the earth, there is nothing dry nor green upon the earth, but what is written in the book of light. 'Tis he who causes you to die, and who knows your deeds both of good and evil — Remember the day that he pronounc'd, Let there be, and every thing was.—He knows things present, future, and past. He is most wise, and nothing is hid from him.—Abraham, upon seeing a very clear star in the night, ask'd himself, if it was his God? No, said he to himself, my God does neither rise nor set*."

Consider dear Aaron, all these different passages, and see what ideas they present to the imagination; judge afterwards of the book by these scraps of it. The moral precepts diffus'd in this work, are beautiful, edifying, and suitable to the sublimity of the notions which it gives of the Divinity. These are some of them: "O you that believe! you have children and wives that are, perhaps, your enemies. Beware of their bad inclinations; but if you pardon them, and keep at a distance from them, God will be gracious and merciful to you. Riches and children

* The Alcoran in the chapter of Gratifications, p. 98

often hinder you from obeying God. But know, that he abundantly rewards good men. Fear him with all your power. Hear his commandments. Obey him. Give alms. He that is not covetous, will be very happy. If you lend any thing to God, he will return you manifold, he will pardon your sins. He loves benefactions; for he himself is very merciful †."

Suppose that a Turk acts according to the precepts laid down in this passage, will not he be, dear Monceca, an honest, virtuous, pious man, and worthy of the esteem of all the universe? Is there any moral more pure than that which recommends charity, and the pardon of offences, and which founds the mercy of God on the exercise of those virtues? Why, therefore, must a book be despis'd, that contains precepts so conducive to the happiness of society? I should be glad to see the good distinguish'd from the bad in the Alcoran, and to hear some things approv'd as well as others condemn'd. The generality who blame this book, have never read it, and perhaps, if they knew it better, they would give it a different character. How many tracts are there of our rabbies, and even of the Nazarene doctors, that would deserve to be as severely censur'd as the Alcoran, tho' they are not so much as talk'd of? At least I am sure that those works don't convey a greater idea of the Divine Being. If we were to make a philosophical disquisition into the books of certain Spanish doctors, what errors should we not find in them? How many principles contrary to good sense, and right reason? How many maxims pernicious to the welfare of society? What a fine book would it make, if all the monkish impertinences were to be collected? One that should go about to write a history of the vagaries of the mind of man, would not fail of matter in memoirs so fruitful and so copious.

The Talmud of the rabbies is a hundred times more ridiculous than the Alcoran. Don't think, dear

† The Alcoran in the chapter of Fraud, p. 110.

Monceca, that the spirit of party influences my opinion. In despising the Talmud, I forget that I am a Caraites. I don't condemn that monstrous work as a partisan and an abettor of an opinion opposite to the rabbies; but as a philosopher, and as a man that endeavours to make use of the light of nature. I make no doubt but some day or other thou wilt be of the same opinion as I am. 'Tis impossible, if thou makest use of they reason, but thou must embrace the opinions of the judicious Caraites. Examine the absurd sentiments of the rabbies; study those of their adversaries; make use of the natural reason which heaven has given thee, and then determine thyself. Thou wilt soon be acquainted what is true Judaism, and that pure law which was given to us by our prophet and legislator. Consider, dear Monceca, that the Jewish rabbies exclaim against certain fabulous stories that are in the Alcoran. They laugh at the weakness of the Turks to credit such chimeras: But Mahomet never said such impertinent things as rabbi Abraham, who imagin'd that the satyrs or fauns were real creatures, tho' imperfect, because God was overtaken by the eve of the sabbath before he cou'd give them the finishing stroke; and that those monsters, because of the sacredness of the day, retir'd to the mountains and forests to conceal themselves, from whence they return'd afterwards to torment mankind.

Is it possible for the mind of a man to be more bewilder'd than to compare God to a vile sculptor, who not being able to finish his work at the week's end, left it imperfect? Reconcile this absurdity, dear Monceca, with the grandeur and speedy execution of the operations of the Divine Being, who no sooner gives the word, but nature obeys, and changes its face. As he created in an instant, so he can in an instant destroy. He said, Let there be light, and there was light. He need only say, Let that light cease, and there must be darkness.

Farewell, dear Monceca; and may the God of our fathers enlighten thy mind, and make thee a Caraites.

L E T T E R

LETTER XC.

The Mahometan religion vindicated from the many ridiculous aspersions thrown on it, and lyes foisted by some Nazarene monks.—One quoted from Bayle with remarks on it.—The more simple religion is, and the less incumbered with ceremonies the better.—Summary of the Mahometan creed quoted.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Paris.——

I Think, dear Isaac, that thy reflections upon the Alcôran are very judicious and am firmly persuaded, that the generality of the people who despise this book, without endeavouring to distinguish the good from the bad, are blinded by the force of prejudice. Most of the Nazarenes have a mistaken, absurd, and even ridiculous notion of the Mahometan religion, and they would not be so much surpriz'd at the Turk's attachment to Mahometism, if they did but coolly examine the motives by which they may be engaged to persist in it.

'Tis an easy matter to call people weak and ignorant, whose virtues or qualities are unknown. 'Tis only to suppose that their qualities have no affinity with the sciences; and then 'tis inferr'd, that by consequence their ideas must be gross, confus'd, and very different from those which are acquir'd by study. But it generally happens, that when a false position is laid down, the inference drawn from it is not conformable to the truth. The Nazarenes are guilty of this fault. They form a judgment of the genius of the Mahometan divines and philosophers, by the odious and fabulous accounts that are daily publish'd by ignorant travellers and monks, who watch all opportunities to decry every thing that is not agreeable to their opinion. 'Tis upon the credit of the fables invented by some Greek authors, that the French, Spanish, English, Italian, German authors, &c. have re-

ported

ported several things of Mahomet, that are not only false, but even contrary to reason. There is nothing so impertinent, and more contrary to the truth of history, than the idea which Morery has given of Mahomet*.

If we may take that priest's word for it, this legislator was a man of a mean extraction, who associated himself with the monk Sergius, and with him compos'd the precepts of his law, and then got it embrac'd by a gang of robbers, of which he was the ringleader. Is not that a very edifying account; and have not they, who judge of Mahomet by this relation, good reason to think those people very weak who have embrac'd his doctrines? But perhaps they would be of another mind, if they had a right notion of this false prophet, and did but know the extent of his genius. The learned Nazarenes were appriz'd of this, but they thought it not worth their while to undeceive people, and that it was necessary to leave them in an error which favour'd Nazarenism. "Mahomet," says the famous la Croze †, "had very fine natural parts. He was agreeable, polite, and obliging, and fit to converse with all mankind. This is the testimony given of him by an oriental christian, who has written a history of Mahometanism in Arabic. As to Mahomet's genius, 'tis natural to conclude that he was an extraordinary man; and this is plain, even from the translations of the Alcoran; tho' by the confession of those who understand the language in which it is written, they come far short of the beauty and majesty of the original."

* Mahomet, the false Arabian prophet, was born, according to some authors, on the 5th of May, Anno 570. The name of his father, who was a Pagan, was Abdella? and that of his mother, a Jew, was Eminia; both of the dregs of the people. His religion, which was partly compos'd of Judaism, and partly of the dreams of heretics, was embrac'd by the wicked and robbers, who knew neither God nor justice. Morery in the article of Mahomet.

† Historical Dissertations on various Subjects, tom. ii. p. 38.
Many

Many other learned Nazarenes have done the same justice to Mahomet; but their writings being only known to scholars, have not defeated the prejudices of the vulgar, which increase every day, and are fomented by the lyes of some Nazarene divines. Bayle reports one invented by a monk, and the reflections he makes upon it are worthy of such a philosopher as he was: "A benedictin of the Netherlands," says he*, "publish'd a book in Latin, and in Low Dutch, in which he inserted a great many idle stories, and this among the rest: A Genoese was so very curious to see what the Moors or Saracens do in their mosques, that he got into one of them by stealth, though he knew very well 'twas their custom to put all christians they find there to death, or to compel them to abjure their religion. There was such a great crowd about him, that he could not go out, when an accident happen'd, which made him wish himself elsewhere: For nature was very pressing for an evacuation. He could not contain himself for his life, and the ungrateful smell that came from him made such a discovery of his condition, that he thought he had not long to live. But he slipp'd his neck out of the halter, by pretending that being costive for a long time, he came on purpose to recommend himself to Mahomet, and that he had found immediate relief. Upon this they took off his breeches, and hung them up in the mosque, crying out, a Miracle! A Miracle! Thus does one half of the world make a jest of the other, for to be sure, the Mahometans are not ignorant of all the ridiculous stories that are told of the monks; and if it were true that they knew nothing of 'em, yet 'tis reasonable to believe, that they propagate lyes and impertinent stories against the christian sects. If they knew the story of the Flemish benedictin, they would say perhaps: "These rare miracle mongers forge very gross ones for us! Not but if they pleas'd, they could invent very cunning

* Historical and Critical Dictionary, in the Article of Mahomet.
ones;

ones; but they keep them for themselves; they drink the wine, and send us the lees."

I will make some small addition, dear Isaac, to the wise and disinterested moral of this Nazarene philosopher. If he had travell'd among the Turks, he would have been more fully convinc'd of the ridiculousness of this story, which has no manner of probability; for thou knowest that the Nazarenes who are settled in the Levant may not wear a turban, but have a hat or cap, tho' they dress otherwise in the mode of the Levant; so that 'tis as easy to distinguish a Nazarene from a Turk, as a Greek from a man who dresses à la mode de France. How could the Turks then let this Nazarene stay so long in the mosque 'till he was oblig'd to do his occasions there? How did it happen, that they who were near him did not know him by his hat or cap? What stratagem did he make use of, to enter the mosque with those badges of Nazarenism? If he was disguis'd, and had put on a turban, he had no occasion to mention the pretended invocation of Mahomet: And, after he was once taken for a Turk, he could run no manner of risque. A Turk, whose necessities were so urgent, that he should happen to soil his breeches, because he could not get out of the mosque for the crowd, would be in no more danger than a Parisian, who, upon the festival of St. Ignatius, should cause a stink in the church of the Jesuits. The two sh——rs would have nothing more to do than to get the lining of their breeches wash'd. The imans of the mosque would not think that Mahomet would turn up his nose at this offensive exhalation; nor would they punish the author of it, unless they thought he did it by way of contempt, in which case they would act very rationally. And surely, upon such an occasion, the Jesuits would not be more gentle than the Mahometans. What would not they do to a Jansemit, who should disturb the festival of their patriarch after so indecent a manner? And what would not the Jansemit do in their turn to a Molinist, who should let such a stoven as to profane the tomb of the Abbé Paris by foul
 Vol. II. Y smells?

smells ? Happy would it be for him if he sav'd his life by the expedient of adding his folly to the number of the saint's miracles ; and, by making oath, that not being of a constitution strong enough to resist the convulsions, the holy deacon had perform'd his cure by a sudden revolution in his bowels. All the Jansenists would then cry out a Miracle ! The relation of the wonderful cure of the sh——rs would be carefully inserted in the *Nouvelles Ecclesiastiques* : And the pontiff of Montpellier would publish a manifesto to prove it authentic.

When the philosophers, dear Isaac, consider the partiality of men in general, for the opinions which they have imbib'd from their infancy, they discover the source of all the ridiculous stories which the several religions have mutually invented of one another. What absurdities don't the generality of the Turks give out concerning the faith of the Nazarenes ? What fables don't the latter invent to our charge ? To endeavour to form a judgment of a religion, by what certain authors of a contrary sect have written of it, is as ridiculous as to expect to find history in the Tales of the Fairies, and those of the Thousand and One Nights.

If one were to credit three fourths of the Nazarene doctors, the blindness which the Turks continue in is only owing to their debauchery, or else 'tis because they have no notion of Nazarenism : But there it nothing so unjust as this sentiment. The Mahometans know the opinions of their adversaries, and they have had several controversial authors that have confuted them, and made use of arguments strong enough to make an impression not only upon minds already prejudic'd, as the Turks are, but even upon those of impartial people, who endeavour to be determin'd by the assistance of the light of nature*. 'Tis certain,

* The Mahometans have written several books of controversy against the christian religion. 'Tis worth while to know their way of disputing with us, and this has engaged me to set down, in this place some extracts out of one of their polemical books [See

tain, dear Isaac, that the more simple a religion is, and the less 'tis incumber'd with articles essential to faith, the more easy is it to be defended. 'Tis this that forms the principal beauty of Judaism, and that demonstrates its dignity and its truth. Now, there is nothing so plain, next to the Jewish religion, as the Mahometan is. I don't speak of ceremonies, these being appendages which have nothing in common with the fundamental principles that constitute a belief necessary to salvation: Besides, all religions, if we except that of the reformed Nazarenes, are alike overcharg'd with improper and vicious customs, which have been introduc'd into them by little and little. A wise man looks upon them as things foreign, that have nothing in common with articles that are essential. Suppose therefore, that, setting aside the ceremonies of the Mussulmen, there was propos'd to a Pagan philosopher, who has no idea of Judaism or Nazarenism, a confession of the Mahometan faith; I doubt not but, after he had consider'd it, he would receive it with submission, and would look upon the man that should explain the truths of it to him, as a great man, as a superior genius, and even as a person enlighten'd by the Deity. That was the very case of the first adherents of Mahomet, who were almost all Pagans. The Jews and the Nazarenes, who join'd them, were extremely ignorant of their religion, and had no true notion of it. They were easily seduc'd by the discourses of Mahomet. His soothing style had the same effect upon them as the beauty of the first principles of his religion caus'd among the Pagans.

[See these Extracts by-and-by.] I take them from the papers of a Spanish Mahometan, who was ambassador from the king of Morocco to the states general of the United Provinces, 1610. This man was a native of Biscay, and probably of the race of those Moors, who, for a long time, possess'd a great part of the Spanish provinces. Having disputed in Holland against princes Maurice, and don Emanuel, the son of don Antonio, king of Portugal, he sent them a Latin letter, after his return into Africa, wherein he endeavours to give them the best account he could of his faith. La Croze's Historical Dissertations on divers Subjects, tom. i. p. 47.

One ought not therefore to be surpriz'd at the sudden progress which has been made by Mahometanism, nor to look upon the first men that receiv'd it as fools or debauchees. The wisest of the Arabians embrac'd it for no other reason but because they were persuaded of the truth of it.

There is nothing so majestic as the Turks confession of faith, This the most learned of the Nazarenes are forc'd to own, and thou thyself shall be the judge of it, by this summary of the Mahometan creed, taken out of the writings of an Arabic author, and inserted in the works of one of the first genius's of Europe*. "Whoever, says the Mahometan, enquires what is the law of Mussulmen, let him know that the creed of their faith is contain'd in these words. "I believe in one only God. I believe in his angels, in all his writings, and in all the prophets whom he has sent into the world, without excepting one, and making no difference between the prophets and the ambassadors of God. I believe in the day of judgment; moreover, I believe that every thing which exists, whether it be pleasing to us or not, was created by God. This is the summary of our faith."

Is it surprizing, dear Isaac, that such shining truths, from which there naturally flows so pure a moral, made an impression upon the minds of so many different people plung'd in Paganism? And as to the Nazarenes who embrac'd Mahometanism, 'tis a mistake to think that the Mussulmen doctors did not make objections to them, enough to puzzle any people who were not well inform'd of their religion. They have made use of the strongest arguments of the philosophers to authorise their sentiments; and the Mahometan Divine, whom I have been quoting, employs the very same arguments, to establish Mahometanism, that serv'd as the foundation of all the Cartesian philosophy, that is to say, the necessity of examining the truth of a thing by

* La Croze's Historical Dissertations, &c. p. 51. 52.

the assistance of natural reason, which cannot deceive us, because tis the only means that God has given us, to distinguish truth from falshood. "God Almighty, said that Arabian, never required nor commanded that man should believe what cannot be comprehended. On the contrary, he has given to man an understanding fit to comprehend every thing that is possible, and every thing that necessarily exists, and to deny and not qualify'd to comprehend every thing that is impossible *." As soon as this principle is granted, dear Isaac, a man must be very much prejudiced, or very short-sighted, if he does not perceive that consequences might be drawn from it strongly in favour of Mahometanism, and that the Nazarenes and Jews who embraced it, might look upon it as the true religion, and suffer themselves to be perverted to specious errors. The fault, dear Isaac, of the divines of all religions, is the affecting too great a contempt of those who adhere to opinions which they oppose. They are not content with saying that they are in an error, but they are for depriving them at any rate of common sense.

Farewell, dear Isaac; and live content and happy.

L E T T E R XCI.

A description of the military government in some parts of France.—Character of the French officers.
—A story of a dog at Perrone that regularly observ'd fast-days, &c,

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Brussels. —

AS I pass'd thro' Flanders, dear Isaac, for Brussels, I had time to examine the French military forces. At 20 leagues from Paris all the towns are fortify'd; and from Perrone to Lisle, the capital of French Flanders, every thing one sees breathes war.

* La Croze, ut supra, p. 48.

A part of the forces of the kingdom is distributed into these several places, where the soldiers observe military order and discipline, with as much strictness as if they were just going to be attack'd by the enemy. I have been told, that before the last war they did not seem so mindful of their duty; and that peace and tranquillity made them lose that severity and exactness so necessary in the art of war: But they have now actually resumed the antient discipline which they had neglected.

The inhabitants of these military places are not near so happy as the other French are, being mere slaves to three or four little tyrants, who pretending the welfare, service and security of the town, put on the airs of a sovereign, and decide the tranquillity, and in a manner the fate, of all the burghers. The governors, the king's lieutenants, and the majors, pretty much resemble the modern sovereign pontiffs. The former come poor into their post, and soon get riches; the latter, under the shelter of the Tiara, speedily raise their friends and relations to the highest dignities. All this is done at the expence of the poor people, who seem only born to be the victims of whoever has the charge of protecting them. I look upon the military governors, excepting, nevertheless those of them that have probity enough to respect humanity, like so many wolves set to guard a flock of sheep; they would be reckoned very moderate among the wolves, their comrades, if the blood of one ewe in a day was sufficient to satisfy their voracious appetite. "What! they would say, not strangle all the flock! Surely, that's a proof of infinite moderation." 'Tis the same thing with the commandants in the fortify'd towns, who are deemed very moderate when they are for plundering only by little and little, and as it were giving time to breathe. I fancy that 'tis for the use of these military officers that a very bad book is composed, *L'Art de plumer la poule sans la faire crier*, i. e. The Art of fleecing without raising a clamour. There are twenty different ways by which the governors empty the citizens purse, without the possibility

of their complaining: For example, they make an order that the townsmen shall keep guard at certain posts, make patrols, mount the guard, which are all military exercises that may be bought off for a certain sum of money, while the governor, in tender friendship to the inhabitants, is willing to excuse them from these jobs, and only takes their money to employ it in procuring some little conveniency for the soldiers of the garison, whom he orders to do duty in the burgher's room. Can there be any thing so fair and just? The place must be guarded. All that he does is only for the Public Service, a couple of magic terms that have virtue enough to fill the commanders purses. The Jesuits do nothing but for the greater Glory of God, and the officers nothing but for the Public Service. These are words which they never forget; they are included in the very orders that they give; and whatever they do, 'tis always with this clause. Perhaps thou wilt ask, dear Isaac, how 'tis possible for them to reconcile the utility of the king's service, with certain things that are absolutely indifferent, and sometimes even contrary to it? I must tell thee, that they are never at a loss for expedients. But when all is said and done, they don't stand so much upon ceremony; and provided they compass their own end, 'tis not the business of private people to judge whether the governor was in the wrong to make the service of his sovereign a cloak for his avarice, or any other fault.

The commanding officers take a certain toll for all provisions that come into the towns upon market days. This being what they have no right to, the burghers exclaim sadly against an imposition that enhances the price of the very necessaries of life; but the governors let them grumble: 'Tis for the king's service that his officers should be well fed, how else could they bear the fatigues of war? They therefore go on in their old way, and are not at all affected with any of those impotent clamours, which are vain murmurings without effect. Not but the court checks the oppressions of the commanders, if they hear of them,

them, and some of them have therefore been severely punished. But when there's a necessity of declaring openly against them, all the burghers act the same part as the rats did in their council against the famous cat which was the destroyer of their race. They all cry out, but none of them cares to tie on the little bell, to take off the mask, and complain first. If the court is informed of the conduct of certain governors, tis a meer chance; for the inhabitants are inured to these military oppressions.

If a man would live free and happy in France he must continue in the provinces that are subject to the governors-general, who are persons of quality that scorn such baseness. They never live in their governments, having great employments which keep them always at court. The people are governed by magistrates, the judges and the consuls, whom they chuse themselves, and who are responsible for their conduct to the parliaments, to whose jurisdiction they belong. These sovereign companies, who are the absolute dispensers of distributive justice in the kingdom, diligently observe the behaviour and actions of the subaltern magistrates.

The governors of the frontier places are not the only persons who make the weight of their dominion felt; for in France, the military gentry in general act despotically. The lowest officers carry an air of pride and haughtiness to the burghers, which to me seems intolerable. One would swear that the former were the sovereigns, and the latter only wretched slaves. They ought however not to be so haughty: For among those whom they despise, there are some men infinitely more to be valued than many others to whom they grant their friendship, and who have no merit to boast but hunting, swearing, and striking a country clown. Thus do the French characterise the gentlemen who live always at their country seats, and whom the military people value much more than the burghers, because their state of idleness gives them a grand air, as being the most essential part of a nobleman.

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The French officer in general is amiable; he is polite, civil, obliging to foreigners, as all his countrymen are; but he is infinitely stupid, always ready to ruin the reputation of a woman, fond of his own person, extravagantly admires new fashions, a debauchee, a man that loves good cheer without drunkenness, ignorant sometimes to such a degree that he can scarce read; but then he repairs that defect by good natural sense, and an easy temper: For the two first hours he is more engaging than any other Frenchman; but if one stays too long with him, he is much more impertinent.

However, dear Isaac, thou must not judge of all French officers by this character; there are some of them that have none of those failings so common to their comrades, and that are as thoroughly versed in the most abstracted sciences as the most eminent Nazarene doctors. They are the more to be valued because they have all the knowledge of the learned, without their pride and vanity. An officer is as careful to conceal his learning, as a philosopher is generally fond to make his known; tho' perhaps, this modesty may be partly owing to policy; for the setting up to be a dogmatist is not the way to please a pack of young blockheads, who had rather be told what balls and feasts there are to be, during the next month, than know which is the most probable system, that of Copernicus, or that of Ptolemy. Thus, by not making a vain parade of his learning, an officer avoids the ridicule of being deemed a pedant; tho' perhaps, if he were in the learned man's place, he would do the same thing as he, and put his name at the head of some tract against pride and vanity.

To see a certain philosopher greedy of praise write against vanity, is like a drunkard, with a glass in his hand, preaching up temperance. As to temperance, I will tell thee a story was told me, when I was at Perrone, of a dog, that may serve as an instance of sobriety. This animal observed fast days, eat no flesh upon Fridays and Saturdays, and would starve rather than

than lick a bone upon those days. He had many other virtues besides ; he was constant at the matins and vespers, and made a thousand little curvets to exprefs his devotion. He rang'd about the churches all day long, and when any dog was so indecent as to lift up his leg to piss against the walls, he bit him without mercy, and taught him the respect which he ought to have for those sacred piles.

'Tis my opinion that a story so well attested may be a foundation for some monks, one day or other, to revive the opinion of the Metempsychosis. For 'tis impossible to imagine an animal to be capable of such knowledge, if his soul did not bring it along with it. Consequently the souls of brutes must needs have innate ideas ; which I think very difficult to be prov'd ; but admitting a Metempsychosis, this opinion will become much more probable ; nor is it difficult to reconcile this system with the Nazarene faith. The friars have nothing more to do than to place Purgatory in the bodies of animals, and then the Metempsychosis will be no such extraordinary matter. They would lose nothing of their revenue by this new system ; for sure I am, that there is not a Nazarene, who, for fear of becoming a post-horse for five or six years, would not give considerable alms to be deliver'd out of such a Purgatory. The missionaries of China, and the Indies, make many converts, by means of the Metempsychosis. All who are told by the Bonzes that they are to pass into the bodies of certain animals, which they think either unclean, or appointed for painful drudgery, apply to the black-gowns, who excuse them from the Metempsychosis.

Perhaps, dear Isaac, thou wilt think I am but in jest, when I tell thee the story of this devout cur ; but I have been assur'd the fact is true, and 'tis my opinion, that many of the Nazarenes incline to the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Their doctors, even the most eminent of them, report several stories that very much favour this sentiment, tho' perhaps they wait till the people are better dispos'd

to receive it, before they make it public. I have read in a certain book, written by a Nazarene doctor, that an ewe of one Francis went to the choir, and when she heard the monks sing, devoutly kneel'd down and kiss'd the ground in token of reverence *.

It no more surprizes me to see a sheep do this, than a dog should leap over a stick for the emperor and the king of France, lie upon its back, or its belly, for the grand signior, and the sopher of Persia. A sheep is teachable as well as a dog, but I can't bear to see recourse had to such puerilities, or rather frauds, for authorizing a religion. It makes me shudder when I see persons whose business it is to inform the people's understandings, abuse their ministry by propagating such chimeras.

I cannot conclude this epistle better than with a passage out of the Nazarene doctor, call'd Acosta, a Jesuit by which the Jews our brethren may benefit, as well as all the Nazarenes. "All miracles, said he, are in vain and insignificant, if they have not the sanction of the scriptures, that is to say, if they have not a doctrine conformable to the scriptures; for the scriptures are of themselves a very strong argument of the truth. How happy would the Jews and Nazarenes be, if the rabbies and monks were convinc'd of this truth!

Farewell, dear Isaac; and live content and happy.

• Gazai Pia Hilaria

LETTER

L E T T E R X C I I .

A conversation between Aaron Monceca and an officer at Lisle; which gives a just idea of the French officers.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS,

Brussels, —

IN my last letter, dear Isaac, I had not room to acquaint thee of a conversation that I had at Lisle with an officer for whom the chevalier de Maifin, gave me a letter when I left Paris. He receiv'd me in the politest, and at the same time in the gravest manner that could be. I was surpriz'd at such a reception; for it seem'd to be a behaviour the very reverse of the temper of a Frenchman, and a military Frenchman too, who is generally gay, merry, and even frolicsome. The chevalier de Maifin had appriz'd me that this officer had a taste for the sciences, which made me the more impatient to be acquainted with him. After some general conversation, we came to talk of people I had known at Paris, among whom I nam'd several persons of learning. He discover'd a great deal of sense and skill, in the judgment which he form'd of their works. "You reason, sir, said I to him, so justly, that 'tis easy to perceive you don't employ all your time in your military occupation." "I own to you, said he, that I spend some part of the day in cultivating the sciences. I wish I could devote myself wholly to study, but I am hinder'd by the calling which I have embrac'd. I am not at liberty to make intire use of my reason but at certain hours. I am oblig'd to be a man but one half of my life; for as to the other half, I am an amphibious sort of animal, with too much sense to be rank'd in the number of beasts, and too little to keep company with such as are really men. My occupations in this state of life are these: To all the women I happen to be in company with, I tell a hundred lyes that are generally absurd and ridiculous, to which they give

give the term of gallantry. I whisper one lady in the ear but what I say is of no signification; she laughs out heartily, and so do I; tho' if any one should ask what made us so merry, we should be very much puzzled to tell. The best answer we could make would be, that 'tis the fashion to laugh after a whisper, or else it would not to be suppos'd that any thing had been said that was witty. I afterwards take another lady by the hand, and praise it for its beauty and whiteness, without so much as considering whether the hand I praise so much be not ugly enough to expose what I say to ridicule. When I am got upon this key of praise, like an instrument, I must harp upon the same string. They that are not real beauties are to blame for it. I must expect to pass for a clown, to be in the company with a woman and not say civil things to her. I therefore tell her what I give out regularly every day, and if it does not suit her, 'tis so much the worse for her. I will not be at the pains to run a fresh round of gallantry for every woman. A fop is in one sense like a preacher: The latter has a certain number of sermons, and the former a number of phrases, which serve them as long as they live. As a panegyric upon St. Clara serves for St. Rose, only changing the name, just so the fine compliments that are made to the countesses will do as well for the marchionesses. If the one is ugly, and the other handsome, that's not the fault of the fop. A tradesman can only put off what he has in his shop.

"Upon this head, continued the officer, I must tell you a very pleasant adventure of mine, that happen'd some time since. I was in company with a woman; but being quite absent from myself, I scarce consider'd whom I was talking to, when as she pull'd off one of her gloves, I happen'd to cast my eye upon her naked hand: O what a beautiful hand is there! I cry'd, without considering what I said. You jeer me, said the lady with a smile which denoted that she was very well pleas'd with my flattery, tho' she had really a very ordinary hand. I don't know, continued she, where there is one so disagreeable:

You are mistaken, Madam, said I, being still heedless of what I said; I know who have much worse. I defy you, said she, to shew me such. That very moment, whether it was by chance, or whether the d—I was in it, I took hold of the lady's other hand, and said, here's one madam, which is at least as ugly as the other. I then came to myself, and endeavour'd to make amends for the silly things that I had said; but 'twas impossible. The fair one with those ugly hands has ever since imputed to malice, what she ought only to have ascrib'd to my distraction. I doubt not but such ridiculous adventures happen every day to several persons; for 'tis impossible but a man that often talks half the day without considering what he says, must fall into mistakes that expose him to ridicule.

“ The conversation, continued the officer, which I have with several of my comrades, is of no more use to form the mind than that sort of which I have been speaking. It runs upon the gallant adventures of the garrison, upon new fashions, upon parties of debauchery the night before, &c. you see that the time which I spend in hearing or talking of such insipid subjects, is time that I ought to look upon as intirely thrown away. I reap no benefit from it. And when I am come to myself, and reflect upon my manner of life, I really think, as I told you before, that I am only a man some moments of the day; and then it is, when being all alone in my chamber, I endeavour to polish my mind by the reading of some good books, and secretly lament the senseless pleasures that I am oblig'd to go abroad for.”

I was surpriz'd dear Isaac to hear a young man talk so sensibly. “ 'Twere to be wish'd, said I, that there were many more young men in the service that talk'd as much to the purpose as you do. If that were the case, we should soon see among the French what was formerly seen in Rome and Athens. The military employment would be no longer reckon'd incompatible with the sciences, which would be so far from being condemn'd by the soldiery, that they would

would extend their sway over them as well as over the other orders of the kingdom." "The sciences, reply'd the officer, are not held in contempt by my comrades. I plainly see that you are not yet perfectly acquainted with the genius of the French nation. Wit is the point and mark which all the French aim at. In what condition soever they are, they strive to be distinguish'd for their genius. The officer has this emulation as well as the clergyman and the magistrate: and as he does not think it becomes a man of sense to despise the sciences, he commends them, and this too, tho' he knows nothing of them; in which he is like to many other people. Provided that he does put persuade his comrades that he loves reading, he is satisfy'd. He has a good shew of books in his chamber, but reads them no more than a court abbe does his breviary. Wit is so much idoliz'd in France, that if Fontenelle or Voltaire had but given their minds to learn to dance upon a rope, they would soon have had the pleasure of seeing 4 or 500 rope-dancers in all the great towns. A friend of mine, who knows not whether Descartes wrote in Hebrew or French, says regularly three times a day, that this philosopher has made it very plain that the sun is fix'd, and the earth turns round it. He has heard something of the Cartesian system talk'd of, and it runs so much in his head, that wherever he goes almost, he communicates it, and it is one of the fine topics with which he entertains five or six ladies every day. Another of my companions has got by heart half a score verses of Racine, eight of Corneille, a couple of phrases of la Bruiere, one of Montaigne, and half a verse of Virgil; and with this furniture he thinks himself the most learned man in France. Not a day passes but he displays these scraps of his learning, and lugs them into the conversation whether right or wrong. Tho' he were to quote Racine's verses concerning the scriptures, and the passage of la Bruiere, with regard to the great mogul's slippers, he must needs make a shew of his learning. You see, therefore, that men of his

character cannot be charg'd with a contempt for the sciences, and you are mistaken in the French officer, to think that he is proud of being ignorant.

“But, continued the Chevalier de Maisin's Friend, you will be still more mistaken if you imagine that all the military gentry of France are ambitious only of the appearance of being learned: For there are many that are so in reality, especially among the engineers, who are oblig'd by their business to study the mathematics; but they are forc'd to reconcile their talents to the military state of life: For, after having work'd, reason'd, and even philosophiz'd in private, they must whisper, sing and play the fool in public, and must discharge their employments, and those duties that are essential to a beau. What reluctance soever they have to submit to this, they would be reckon'd dull, stupid numbskulls, and incapable of making a genteel appearance, if they should offer to exempt themselves from it. Consequently such officers, Sir, as you often see with their hands in their sashes, shrugging up their shoulders, hanging down their heads, and making an appearance which seems odd to you that are a stranger, would talk as frankly to you as I do, if you went to see them at their own habitations; and would confess to you, as well as I, that they very often lament their hard fate, to be the victims of a ridiculous custom that enslaves them to fashions which were only introduc'd by people who having not merit enough to recommend them by their actions and conversation, invented gestures, contorsions, prim airs, and a fantastic deportment, to which they annex'd great glory. And indeed fortune has favour'd their views: Those customs have prevail'd; all the French nation has adopted them, and particularly the officers: Therefore in spite of one's teeth they must be submitted to. All the comfort we have is to condemn them in the company of men of sense. Be not therefore surpriz'd, sir, if I have receiv'd you in a more serious manner than you expected. From the chevalier de

Maisin

Maifin's letter, I conceiv'd too good an opinion of you to entertain you after the French mode."

The sensible discourse of this officer, dear Isaac, made me reflect seriously upon the character of the French nation. There's good sense in the several states, but in all those states it seems that they dare not follow the rules of reason upon certain occasions. The empire of mode destroys that of wisdom. The magistrates and the clergy are under the same difficulties as the gentlemen of the army. A young counsellor of parliament affects to be as gay as possible in his dress. He fancies that black is not so engaging as the other colours. He is shy of talking law before company, for fear that he should be call'd a Pedant, and what is worse, Robin, a name more dreaded by the gentlemen of the long robe, than taxes and impost are by the common people. Is it not ridiculous that a man should be ashamed of his profession, especially when 'tis so honourable an one as that of dispensing justice to mankind, and that he should be afraid to shew that he is worthy of the rank which he holds in life, and that he is master of his business? Can one sufficiently admire, that rather than have the satisfaction of receiving the praise suitable to his profession, he should chuse to be thought destitute of every thing that favours of the robe; that is to say of every thing that he ought to have, and of what is the essential part of his duty?

The clergy are no wiser than the magistrates. The prelates and court abbes would think themselves a contemptible body if they did not spend the income of their benefices in equipages, furniture and plate. They would be the first to laugh any one to scorn that should offer to act in a different manner: "He is an honest man, they would say, he preaches well, but he keeps a very poor house." A clergyman who spent his whole time at court, in giving good advice, and preaching edifying sermons, would act a very dull part, compar'd with a pontiff, who spends 100,000 crowns a year, They don't trouble

themselves whether he be ignorant, prodigal or voluptuous, provided he keep an excellent table. When people go to the house of a rich abbot, they seldom enquire into the state of his library, but very often into the stock in his cellar; and many of them would blush to be reckon'd divines. They affect to be witty, and would be raving mad to have it thought that they are not qualify'd to judge of a tragedy, or a romance; nor would they have it imagin'd that they trouble themselves with the perusal of books of their own order, for fear it should deprive them of their reputation for wit and good-nature. They fancy that a man who applies himself to certain sciences is incapable of the delicacy requir'd by others. If they made use of their reason, and were not altogether such slaves to prejudices and modes, they would soon perceive that all the sciences are link'd to one another †, and that 'tis impossible to be perfect in any one of them, without acquiring just notions at the same time of the others.

Farewell, dear Isaac; and live content and happy.

L E T T E R X C I I I.

Character of the people of Brussels; of their nobility and Clergy; of the Capuchin Friars; and of St. Francis the founder of their first monasteries.—Some miracles pretended to be wrought by St. Francis.—A story of an image in the church at Ghent.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS

Brussels—

TH E manners of the Flemings and Brabanders are very much like those of their neighbours the French, but their genius's are quite contrary.

† Etenim omnes artes, quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognatione quadam inter se continentur. Cicer. Orat. pro Archia Poeta, in exord.

The

The people of Brussels, and in general of all Brabant, are frank, good-natured, and tolerably civil; but they are excessively simple, so that their simplicity borders a little upon stupidity. One would swear that the men are infected by the foggy air of the country; and that the climate has an influence upon the mind as well as the body.

The nobility are chimerically vain of their quality, to a degree of folly. A poet is not so much prepossessed in favour of his works, as a Brussels gentleman is in favour of his nobility. There are more Excellencies in this city than in all the world besides; for unless Excellencies be tack'd to a man's name here, he is neither great, valuable, nor respected: And it must be confess'd that titles are in no part of the world so cheap as in the Austrian Netherlands, where they are become so common, that they have lately taken it into their heads to set all the different states, as it were, upon a level. The gentlemen, so infatuated with their nobility, have obtained leave to turn merchants, for the better maintenance of their Excellencies, who would run the risque of being starved; and the merchants have received the privilege of ruining themselves, and of acquiring all the titles necessary for that end*. There's no doubt but they improve the opportunities given them to squander their estates, and then they may begin again to trade, till they are able to purchase more new titles to join to the former.

'Tis not the bare title of count, baron, marquis, duke, &c. that give merit to a nobleman of Brussels. The antiquity of his family has also a great share in engaging a respect to it. If nobility has existed in one family a hundred years longer than in another, that's enough to make people excessively respected, who would otherwise be much despised. In a convent, near the city of Louvain, there's a genealogical tree of the family of Croy, by which it is clearly proved, from father to son, that the head of this family, who

* The placards upon this head were lately published.

was living thirty or thirty-five years ago, was descended in a direct line from Adam. I was hugely pleased to find that the Brussels nobility were so modest as not to adopt the opinion of the Pre-Adamites; and that they rather chose to content themselves with being descended from Adam, than to admit an opinion contrary to the book of Genesis.

As the nobility of Brabant is very antient, their accomplishments and their talents are, on the other hand, very mean. They are a little more ignorant than the Spaniards, and a little more superstitious than the Portuguese; and ignorance is so much the portion of the Brabanders in general, that the common people dispute this point with the burghers, the burghers with the nobility, and the nobility with the clergy. If we except Justus, Lipsius, Albertus Mireus, and a few others, I don't believe there ever was an author either in Flanders or Brabant worthy the esteem of the learned. This country has produced indeed some sorry Latin poets, and some divines of the class of Escobar and Tambourin; but I should as soon look for snow in the desarts of Barca, as for good poets, great orators, and able philosophers, in Flanders, and in Brabant. The very Jesuits in these provinces (which is a thing surprising and incredible) have a mean genius, and their politics favour of the thickness of their air. They are as ambitious indeed as they are elsewhere, but they don't so well know how to conceal it. They endeavoured for forty years to have great bells at Brussels, like those in the parish churches; but it being a thing commonly practis'd, they could not obtain leave to have them: Despairing of success, they apply'd to their brethren at Paris, to consult them in an affair of such importance, which could not but stir up the rage and jealousy of the curates, and the other monks. The Jesuits of Paris, provoked to find their brethren so shallow, did not vouchsafe to return them an answer themselves, but gave the matter in charge to a mere lay-brother, leaving it to him to direct their thick-skull'd brethren at Brussels, to such expedient as he

should

should think most proper. This lay-brother was proud of the honour, and had a mind to shew them that he had more wit than all the Ignatians at Brussels put together. He wrote a letter therefore to them in the style of the Lacedemonian Epistles, which only contained these words: "Let a so'lemn catechising be your pretence, my fathers, for which great bells are necessary to be heard all over Brussels." The Jesuits of this city luckily understood what the lay-brother meant; they catechised twice a week, and at length obtained their desire.

Tho' they have a fine church here, yet that of the Capuchin friars exceeds it. This is a very nasty, ignorant fraternity, the excrement of the monks, and the most unprofitable to the state. They only live upon charity, have no public school, pretend to great humility, go half naked, wear a long beard, with a cord about their middle, and nothing looks so nasty and slovenly as their habit. Yet the common people have as much veneration for them as the Turks have for their dervises. But notwithstanding they appear so humble and devout, there are few friars so wicked as those of this order, and in all countries they are much alike. In Spain they were at the head of the rebels in Catalonia, and were seen upon the ramparts of Barcelona, in the middle of the soldiers, exciting them to burn and slay. During the plague in Provence, while that country smarted for its crimes, those hypocritical wretches had thoughts of repeopling the towns, and of repairing the damage occasioned by the pestilence; for two of them went so far as to ravish a young woman, that was their fellow-servant at the infirmaries, for which they were apprehended; but they found means to get off; and by an arret of parliament they were both hang'd up in effigy.

The founder of the first monasteries of these lazy abbesss, was one Francis, a very crafty man, who had the secret of giving an air of sanctity to the most extravagant deeds. His disciples have writ the principal actions of his life, of which there is not one, how

how ridiculous soever, but they have extoll'd it to the sky. "One day, say they *, a grasshopper came and gave notice of fine weather approaching by its singing. Francis called the animal to him, and putting it on his finger, Come, sister grasshopper, says he, and sing the praises of the Deity." The grasshopper obey'd, and when it had made an end of singing, Francis thank'd it very politely, and sung himself in his turn :

Votre soin n'est plus necessaire :

Vous pouvez deormais partir en liberte :

i. e. You need do no more, and now you may freely go.

Thou wilt no doubt laugh, dear Isaac, at such impertinences, and will be at a loss to determine which is the greater fool, he that writes, or he that believes them. The following is another diverting story, which I met with in the life of this Francis : He was in Lombardy, and not being very well, he eat a capon for his supper, one Friday, which was seven years old, only he gave a leg of it to a poor man that came to his door for charity, who being resolved to put a trick upon him, kept the leg till next day when the saint preach'd : Then he shewed it to the people, and said to them : " See what flesh the friars eat, whom you worship as a saint ; for he gave it to me last night with his own hand." But the limb of the capon appeared to every one to be fish, so that they all thought him disordered in his senses ; and when he perceiv'd this,† he was ashamed, and ask'd pardon †.

Thou perceivest, dear Isaac, that this Francis had the art of bewitching the eyes of the people. I dare say that his children have lost nothing of their father's

* The Legend of St. Francis.

† The Life of St. Francis.

talents, and that they can make them believe a pack of rascals to be very religious fellows.

Tho' there is no inquisition at Brussels, yet people would run a very great risque if they talked freely upon such matters, the Brabanders being the most superstitious of all people living. Some ages ago, certain brethren of ours were burnt, who were accused very wrongfully of having abused the misteries of the Nazarene religion; and those unfortunate wretches were executed upon the highest tower of the city walls. Its inhabitants add the death of our brethren to the number of their miracles; for they say, that the fire in which they were burnt was seen fifteen leagues round, and that two infernal figures were seen in it, which vanished as soon as the Israclites were intirely consum'd. They make ballads upon this pretended adventure, to feed the superstition of their populace; and, upon a certain day, I saw one of their Amphions strolling about, and singing one of this kind:

Accourez tous, pour voir, peuple fidele,
Ce vilain Juif appellé Jonathan,
Lequel, pousse d'abominable zele,
Assassina le tres saint Sacrement.

i. e. Come away, all believers, and see this villain of a Jew called Jonathan, who, excited by an abominable zeal, stabb'd the most holy Sacrament.

Jacob Brito has given me an account of several fables which are told by the Italians; but in Flanders and Brabant there are as many false miracles, and religious chimeras, as in Italy. In a church at Ghent* they shew an image that had a very long conversation with a female votary, who being afflicted in mind, because her companions were gone abroad for their diversion, and had not taken her along with them, cried for mere vexation, to see herself so slighted;

* The Beguines.

upon which, said the image to her, "What is the matter, my dear child? Alas! Madam, reply'd the votary, (for 'twas a female figure that talk'd to her) I know not what I have done to my companions, but they slight me, and have refus'd to take me abroad with them. Don't vex thyself, (reply'd the figure) To-morrow, Child, thou shalt be merry with me; thou shalt have a wedding of thy own, that will last for ever." She said no more of the matter, and did not tell her who was the illustrious bridegroom that was designed for her. But next day the votary dy'd, and the image remained with its mouth open, that there might be no doubt of the reality of this miracle. The people of Ghent have an extraordinary veneration for this figure, so that they would not change it for the Farnese Hercules; and the Venus of Medicis. They are very much astonish'd when they tell this story to any strangers, and find them loth to believe it. "What! say they, don't you believe that this saint spoke? Yet there is nothing so certain; for every body in the town affirms it, and tis entered in the registers of the church." It would be in vain to attempt to dispute the reality of these miracles. Tis prudent to keep a silence, which is necessary for all travellers, and particularly for such as happen to be of a religion different from that of the country in which they are. Tis even dangerous in many of the Nazarene countries for people to explain themselves too freely. It may be done indeed in France without running any risque; for, provided a respect be paid to the Deity, and to the person of the prince, little notice is taken of other discourse; but in the Netherlands the monks have almost as much credit as in Italy, and they are altogether as rich. I have been told that of 35000 acres of land which the province of Brabant consists of, there are no less than 29000 that are the property of the ecclesiastical convents.

If the priests don't purchase titles in this country tis their own fault; for they are rich enough to procure themselves as much Excellency as they please.

please. You shall see a prior or superior of a convent of Benedictines, Bernardines, &c. that has many more ducats than many Brussels gentlemen have pence. They that are rich send their children to spend some time at Paris, where they are completely ruin'd, and exchange what is valuable of their own country for what is vile in France. They affect to ape the manners of the fops, and their forms of speech. But they make such a ridiculous figure, that those frolicsome and light airs look as awkwardly upon them, as the pacing of a manag'd horse does upon a Cheval de Frise. A Brabander, who plays the wanton, puts me in mind of the ass in the fable, who would needs imitate the lap-dog. Methinks I see the long-ear'd animal throwing his two fore-legs amorously about his master's neck. Fontaine was in the right to say, "Let us not put a force upon our talent;" for a man becomes ridiculous when he attempts to go out of his sphere: The fondness for imitating French fashions has frequently been the ruin of many a foreigner and the brains of many a Frenchman have been turn'd, by attempting to reflect profoundly, like the Englishman. I admire the serenity and tranquility of the Dutch, who let nothing trouble them, but always go on in their own way, and live at Paris, and at London, as they do in the middle of Amsterdam *.

* Et si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum serient ruinae.

LETTER XCIV.

A further account of the inhabitants of Egypt.—The Egyptians great cowards, effeminate and inactive.—The Coptes use circumcision, and practise divorce on every trifling occasion.—History very defective in several Facts relative to the Egyptian nation.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo. —

IN one of my letters, dear Monceca, I gave thee an account of the manners and customs of the Coptes, the descendants of the antient inhabitants of Egypt. I shall now endeavour to make thee acquainted with what I observed of the other people that live in these fruitful provinces.

Thou knowest, dear Monceca, that after the death of Alexander, his successors reigned there for a long time, even till they were conquer'd by the Romans. They were afterwards subject to the emperors of Constantinople; and then they fell under the dominion of Mahomet's successors. At length the sultan Selim made himself master of Egypt, at the expence of but one battle. Tonumbey, the last sultan of Egypt, who was crown'd by the Mamalucs, was found conceal'd, after the reduction of Cairo, in a marsh where the Arabs thought him safe; and the implacable Selim, without regard to his prisoner's dignity and rank, order'd him to be hang'd. Thus died the last sovereign of Egypt.

What is extraordinary in this country is, that one finds, amongst the modern Egyptians, almost the same customs, as amongst the antients. 'Tis even impossible to be long acquainted with them without catching their humour and their manners. Thou art not ignorant, dear Monceca, how much the temper of the Turks, which is naturally serious and phlegmatic, differs from the gay humour of the Egyptians; but by degrees they lose somewhat of their gravity: And

the climate of this country has such an influence upon the inhabitants, that though the Turks are brave and martial, the children they get in this country, become cowardly, like the other Egyptians, who are, to the last degree, poltroons. Therefore all persons born in Egypt are by the laws themselves excluded from military posts; and though, by a special favour, the children of the Turks have the privilege of being common soldiers, yet this right does not extend beyond the second generation. And all the militia that the grand signior keeps up in Egypt, are recruited by the Turks that are sent from the European and Asiatic provinces (*).

This degeneracy, owing to the air of the country, makes the people of quality glad to mix their blood with that of foreigners; for men, as well as animals, decline in Egypt, from one generation to another. The horses here, by degrees, lose their speed, the lions their strength and courage, and the very birds here are inferior to those of other countries (†).

Effeminacy and inaction, are peculiar to the Egyptians. And though this kingdom is now no more than a shadow of what it was heretofore, yet the people's notions are the same as ever. They are idolizers of feasts, love music, shews, and dancing, even to excess. And the modern Egyptians vie with the ancients in the taste of every thing that may be an agreeable entertainment to the senses. But what will undeniably prove to thee how much the inhabitants of these countries are wedded to their ancient customs, is, That the difference of religion hinders no body from conforming to them. 'Tis probable that they had circumcision in Egypt, before our ancestors were deliver'd out of their captivity; and the custom is still kept up, not only among the Mahometans, who practise it every where, but also among the Nazarenes. All the Coptes admit of circumcision, and maintain that their fathers always practis'd it. If

(*) Mallet's Account of Egypt. Part II. p. 67.

(†) Ibid.

this be true, to be sure, when Egypt was altogether Nazarene, the inhabitants were all circumcised alike; since the Coptes, who are still above forty thousand in number, tho' Nazarenes, cause themselves to be circumcised; and look upon this ceremony or operation as very essential. They even circumcise the daughters; for, some time ago, a wealthy Copte refused to marry a young lady, who had not been circumcised, and would not consent to conclude the marriage till his future spouse had undergone that operation; which these Nazarenes think as essential a ceremony as we do.

'Tis a certain fact, that it was established in Egypt long before Herodotus; for this historian mentions it as one of the antient customs of the inhabitants of this kingdom, and of which they did not know the first original: "The Phœnicians and Syrians, who are in Palestine," says this author, "confess that they learnt circumcision from the Egyptians: And moreover the Syrians, who inhabit the banks of Thermodon and Parthenio, and the Macrons, their neighbours, own, That not long ago, they learnt the same thing from them — As for the Egyptians and Ethiopians since, it has been of antient use among both those people; I cannot say which of the two is beholden for it to the other. 'Tis however probable that the Ethiopians receiv'd it from the Egyptians, when they began to be intimate with them*."

Some authors, and even certain rabbies, pretend, that it was not practised in Egypt before we departed out of that country; and that it was Moses who commanded it. Yet I don't see any great harm, dear Monceca, in supposing that he deriv'd the use of it from the Egyptians; and that finding it conducive to the neatness of the body, and necessary in hot countries, he made it an essential maxim to oblige the practice of it with the more exactness. What would induce me to think the Jews circumcised after the exam-

* Herodotus, Book II. p. 102. translated by du Ryer.

ple of the Egyptians, is, that they have retain'd several of the customs of those people, and such as we still observe. "An Egyptian man or woman," says Herodotus, "never kisses the lips of a Grecian; and, for the same reason, never makes use of the knife, spit, and pot, of a Grecian; and never eats the flesh of an ox that was ever touch'd with the knife of a Grecian*." We still observe the same ceremonies as the Nazarenes; and no doubt our ancestors observ'd the same as the Pagans. From whence have we deriv'd these customs and these rules? They are not commanded by the written law, and yet they are of great antiquity; and the Egyptians practis'd them as well as we. Is it not plain that we have copy'd from them? I look on them as superstitions, which have nothing to do with the pure law of Moses. Tho' I were not a Caraites, dear Monceca, I should make no difficulty to reject all those chimeras, which I never approv'd, even when I was a Rabbi. For how is the Divinity affected by such puerilities? If I have a pure heart without vices; if I observe the law, which God himself has prescrib'd to me, and which his prophet has given to me, why should I fear to be wanting in any thing? Why should I attempt a thousand little actions, which injure those that practise them, and the religion that commands them? Nothing is so beautiful and noble as the Jewish religion, consider'd in a Caraites; but nothing is so contemptible and deformed, as the same religion in a Rabbi. These two different systems of faith are extremely opposite to each other.

'Tis not in the point of circumcision alone that the Nazarene Coptes thus retain the antient customs of the country. Divorce is practis'd by them, insomuch that a couple, who have been marry'd a long time, and have even had children, make no scruple to separate, and marry again. When the husband parts from his wife, he is oblig'd to give her back what she brought. The Coptes say, their ancestors always did

* Herodotus, Book II. p. 202. translated by du Ryer.

the same. They pretend, that circumcision and divorces have been establish'd in their sect, time out of mind. The European Nazarenes say the contrary; and affirm, that these customs were only introduced by the Mahometan nations when they invaded Egypt; and that the Coptes received from the Arabians, and not from the antient Egyptians; they being disused at the time that Egypt was intirely Nazarene.

This opinion has strong proofs to support it, and I should be very much inclined to believe it. But tho' the use of antient customs was interrupted among the Egyptians, this does not hinder but we may have derived some of our ceremonies from them; for those that we have always practis'd, and which we still retain, we observ'd in Egypt long before Herodotus; and the time when they were instituted is not known; nor is it likely that we can now be certain of what could not be known above two thousand years ago.

There are several facts of which no trace can be found in history, and such as lie for ever bury'd in oblivion. One may well be surpris'd to find in the books which are transmitted to us, not the least hint of some of the most considerable events that have happen'd. Is it not amazing, that no historian, Egyptian, Greek, or Roman, has made mention of the drowning of Pharaoh; and that they do but barely mention our departure out of Egypt, and that with the utmost contempt, in such a manner, that they not only say nothing of passing the Red Sea, but dare even to affirm, that our ancestors were a parcel of lepers, that were driven out of the country, as a nasty infected people? The Egyptians hatred for our nation may possibly have led those historians into this mistake: But I think it surprising, that in the annals of Egypt, and in the histories of this nation, there is no mention of that event which was the destruction of Pharaoh and all his host. How is it possible to imagine, that Greece, Ethiopia, Thrace, and the other empires bordering upon Egypt, could be ignorant of such a fact as that? And supposing it true that the Egyptians should, out of pride, chuse to conceal

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from posterity, what reason could other people have to pass it over in silence? Mean time we have no room to doubt of Pharaoh's punishment: Our sacred books determine our belief in this point; and since they have declar'd it, we have nothing to do but to assent to it.

We must own therefore, dear Monceca, that history leaves us often very much confounded in the most material points, and that it is not capable of giving us light; the books that treat of the Egyptians speak of them as of a people so antient, that they only give a vague and slight account of what their priests said of their antient governments. But how can one give credit to the tales and fables of those priests, who affirm'd, and obstinately maintained, the truth and reality of their dynasties, which they carry'd above seventeen thousand years backwards; another plain contradiction both to our books and our writings? Certain it is, that Egypt is one of the countries which we find was the soonest peopled after the flood, and rais'd to great power. Herodotus says, that in the reign of Amasis, one of the first kings of Egypt, there were twenty thousand very populous towns; the inhabitants whereof cultivated the sciences. 'Twas this Amasis that caused the temples of Vulcan and Minerva to be adorned with colossal statues, and a house to be placed at the entrance of the latter, made of one single stone; which two thousand men, belonging to the sea, were no less than three years removing thither. This house is twenty cubits in front, fourteen in breadth, and eight in height †. Herodotus speaks of it as one that saw it. Is it possible then, that a people who built such stately monuments, and who were such masters of the arts and sciences, could totally forget so considerable an event as the destruction of Pharaoh? This is a demonstration to us how many things there are of which history leaves us in the dark.

Farewell, dear Monceca; live content and happy.

† Herodotus, lib. II.

LETTER XCV.

A Description of the city of Antwerp.—A pleasant passage relating to the citadel.—This city has given birth to some very extraordinary painters.—Observations on the pieces of several eminent painters.—Quintin Mathys from a blacksmith turn'd painter, to obtain the affections of his mistress, and became excellent.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Antwerp.—

ANtwerp, where I have now been for two days, is the most considerable city in Brabant. London and Antwerp were formerly two rivals in commerce; yet they were united with respect to their interests. These two cities were of a distinguish'd rank in the Teutonic league or Hanse; but now the port of Antwerp is quite bare of shipping. Amsterdam has utterly ruin'd the trade of this city; which has nothing to shew but some tokens that it was once a place of grandeur. The city is well built; and though the houses have nothing magnificent, they are very regular, and make a handsome appearance. The citadel is beautiful, and well fortify'd*. I have read in a certain Nazarene author†, a very pleasant passage relating to this citadel; which shews the natural simplicity of the Brabanders, both in their way of acting, and their manner of explaining themselves.

When this fort was deliver'd by the Spaniards, to the Duke of Arlcot, in 1577, the duke, putting his hand between the person's hands who was to receive his oath, pronounced these words: "I swear, by the name of God and holy Mary, that I will faithfully keep this citadel." After which, the following answer was returned to him, as part of the ceremony: "If you do so, God assist you; if not the devil

* It has five bastions, nam'd Ferdinand, Toledo, Duke, d'Alva, Paciotto. The last is the name of the engineer.

† Chappuys.

take your body and soul." And the whole assembly answer'd, very devoutly, "Amen; and so be it." None but a native of Brabant could have invented such a form for an oath of fidelity; I don't believe it could have enter'd into the heads of the Swifs; for 'tis as coarse as 'tis comical.

The people of Antwerp are as superstitious as those of Brussels, and as simple; and the manners of both cities are exactly alike. 'Tis true, that the nobility of Antwerp don't trace their genealogies so far back as Adam, like those of Brussels; and that they own frankly their descent from some rich merchants: But, bating this, they are as much infatuated with their new nobility, as the others are with the antient kind.

We see very few excellencies at Antwerp, the persons of condition having no other appellation than plain Monsieur; tho' when they go to Brussels, to put themselves in the fashion, and to cut a grand figure, I don't know whether they don't make their servants give them the title of excellency; for the generality of the Flemish gentry could never yet obtain that title but from such persons as are their dependants. The common-people call them also by this vain-glorious title; but they have been so wise hitherto, as not to expose themselves so far to ridicule as to bestow that of excellency upon one another in conversation. However, I fancy that they will carry the jest to this pitch at last; which, if they do, the word will grow as common and as frequent in their conversations, as Monsieur.

Tho' wit and sprightliness of genius are not the endowments of the people of Antwerp; yet this city has produced very great painters. Rubens, Vandyke, Otho Venius, have bred several famous scholars; and are not inferior to the Raphaels and the Titians. Vandyke especially has distinguish'd himself from the other Flemings, and deserves the appellation of Rubens refin'd: for to the beauty of that painter's colourings, he has added a much more accurate correction to the designs. Vandyke was the only Flemish designer
whose

whose works have not the complexion of the genius of his country, and of the air of the climate. The designs of Rubens, Otho Venius, and all their pupils, are very often in the heavy, stupid stile. Notwithstanding a thousand beauties which sparkle in their pictures, they always discover a certain Flemish taste; which is dull, gross, and far from the light touch of the Italians, those faithful copiers of the beauties of antiquity. The women painted by Raphael, Corregio, and Carlo Maratti, have something divine. The very nymphs, in their works, resemble goddesses; but commonly in those of the Flemings, the goddesses resemble coarse chambermaids.

In the Luxemburg palace at Paris, I saw the famous gallery painted by Rubens. The very blood seems to circulate in the figures drawn upon cloth by that skilful painter. Nature itself has no colourings more perfect. I say, there is something more delicate in the contours or out-lines; and it may be said, that Rubens would have been the top man of his art, if he had been born in Italy. Tho' he resided there a long time, he could not intirely get quit of the first ideas which he had contracted in his own country; and, in his finest pieces, he always drew some Flemish figure. True it is, that he made amends for this failing by so many other beauties, that it would be unjust not to pardon him.

This great man form'd several pupils; and, for a good while, Flanders could boast of many able painters. But actually there's nothing now left of the famous schools of Vandyke and Rubens, but some pictures in churches, and in the closets of the curious. The painters dispersed up and down in Flanders, at this time, are mere dawbers, compared to their old masters. They retain, indeed, somewhat of their colourings; but they are so much out in the other parts of painting, their design is so incorrect, and their composition so languid, that there's nothing of the Flemish school existing now but in the works of the dead.

One would think that the number of painters and sculptures should increase every age, and that the fine arts, instead of decaying, should be improved; but the scholars are so far from out-doing their masters, that they fall short of them every day. It has happen'd to the Flemings, with regard to Rubens and Vandyke, as it did to the Italians, with regard to Raphael, Titian, the two Carrachio's, Corregio, Julio Romain, &c. Excepting thirty or forty years after the death of those great men, who liv'd much about the same time, Italy could scarce boast, in any age, of more than one or two painters that merited the esteem of all the connoisseurs. It had, a hundred years ago, Guido, and Carlo Maratti, whose names will live to posterity; but Trevisani and Soliman are now the only persons who, in their art, have attained to that degree of perfection which insures immortality. Trevisani is charming; he designs correctly, but he has something faint and pale in his colourings; which is the common failing of the Roman school. It seems, dear Isaac, as if particular talents are assign'd to certain countries, which the natives of another can never acquire to the same degree of perfection.

When painting was in its most flourishing state, there were three schools of renown; the Flemish, which excelled in colouring; the Roman, in design; and the Venetian, which aimed to excel in both. Titian and Tintoret surpassed the Flemings in their designs, and the Romans in colourings: But nevertheless, if they united the talents of the two other schools, they surpass'd or equall'd them only in those parts wherein those schools least excelled. A picture of Titian, well colour'd and well design'd, is not so well design'd as another of Raphael, and inferior in colouring to a piece of Rubens. I think therefore, dear Isaac, that I am not mistaken when I assert, that certain talents are peculiar to certain countries; and that the first impressions which the mind receives when it begins to apply itself to the arts and sciences, cannot be intirely effaced after all the care taken to eradicate the worst part of them, and to perfect the rest.

The

The case is the same with respect to the first steps in study, as with the first prejudices imbibed in childhood, about religion. A person can never be wholly divested of them: And I am sure, that when a Nazarene turns Mussulman, and a Jew turns Nazarene, a thousand reflections often recur in their minds, which tis not in their power to banish.

The greatest men always retain something of their first taste, and that of their country, or the school in which they were educated. That's what the painters call Manner; and what study and travels into foreign countries cannot drive out of their heads. Rubens was in Italy a long while; and many other Flemings have worked at Rome. They have really refined their manner, and purify'd their taste; but they still savour of the first impressions; and all the care or pains in the world can never make a Flemish painter as good a designer as an Italian. Nay, love itself, which sometimes makes scholars of mere novices, could never work such a miracle; though of a locksmith it may make an excellent painter. Of this I have seen a singular instance at Antwerp. About thirty paces from the cathedral I was shewn a well, whose windlass of iron, to which hangs a pulley, is adorned with foliage: Tis the work of a locksmith, one Quintin Mathys, who fell in love with a painter's daughter; but tho' he was a fellow of good sense, and a clever workman at his calling, he could not obtain his mistress; her father being resolved not to have a locksmith for his son-in-law. Love made Quintin abandon the anvil and hammer for the pencil and the pallet; and the desire to please guiding his hand, he soon became an able workman, and distinguished himself so well in his new art, that he excelled all the painters of Antwerp, and had the good fortune to marry his mistress. I have seen this kind of epitaph against the walls of the great church over the tomb where this painter of a locksmith was buried:

Connubialis amor de mulcibre fecit Apellem.
i. e. The

i. e. The almighty power of conjugal love made an excellent painter of a niere blacksmith."

This is all, dear Isaac, that I have yet seen remarkable in this city. Though it lies very near to Holland, the Romish is the only religion that is tolerated there; but our fathers could never settle there, and we are only suffered there en passant. There's no inquisition in Brabant nor Flanders, yet the people there are as much devoted to the friars as in Spain and Italy. The nobles are as much slaves to them as the commonalty; and they would think it an illustration to their antient nobility, to persecute any that differed from them in opinion. This puts me in mind of the duke of Montpensier; who caused all the reformed Nazarenes that fell into his hands, to be hanged, and their handsome women to be ravished*; and all this for the greater glory of God. And what possessed him with this diabolical opinion, was nothing but his descent from a king, whom the Nazarenes look upon as a saint. This honest monarch went to persecute the Mahometans, even to the centre of Africa; and there he died, after having put the affairs of his kingdom into very great confusion by a zeal so furious and mistaken.

Very ridiculous, dear Isaac, is the blindness of those who think to merit the esteem of mankind by destroying their fellow-creatures, that have been guilty of no crime, and given them no occasion of complaint! Of all follies, or rather, of all furies, the most pernicious is that which possesses some persons of quality with a notion, that men of their rank ought, by all manner of ways, to maintain and propagate a religion which their fathers profess'd.

Farewell, dear Isaac; and live content and happy.

* Brantome's Memoirs, tom iii.

L E T T E R XCVI.

Some conjectures relating to the pyramids of Egypt.—

A quotation from Herodotus relating to one of them.—An absurd account of the origin of pyramids by the Arabian authors.—An entertaining adventure at a procession of certain shrines at Marfailes.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo. —

I Have not yet given thee an account of the famous pyramids of Egypt, which were erected by the antient kings of this country, to serve for their tombs. Some ignorant people, and others that were learned, but prejudiced, treat of these stately monuments as if they were only so many piles of stones heap'd one upon another without much art. But when tis considered that the darling passion of the antient Egyptians was to have stately tombs erected in their life-time, where their bodies might rest secure from that corruption to which all the dead are subject, and from the curiosity and avarice of all mankind, one shall not wonder that kings so powerful as those of Egypt were, caused these perpetual monuments to be built to procure themselves that repose which they desired to enjoy after their death.

The names of the monarchs by whose order such magnificent tombs were erected, are not known. Among them they reckon one Psamneticus, though there is no reason to support that opinion, which can render it probable. Some have pretended that Mercury caused the three pyramids to be built; and others, that the most considerable of all was built by that Pharaoh, the persecutor of our nation, who was drown'd in the Red-Sea. They think to prove their opinion by the gap in the pyramid, which they say was never closed; but in this they are grossly mistaken: For if we examine it with ever so little attention, tis plain that it has been opened, and even with a great deal of labour and pains.

Some

Some antient authors say, that one of those antient monuments was built by a famous courtesan, called Doricha; though others gave her the name of Rhodope. Herodotus pretends, that the lady who built this pyramid out of the profits she made by the favours of her gallants, was the daughter of one Cheopes, a king of Egypt, who intirely ruined himself by the expence of erecting the others. Mean time, this seems absolutely fabulous; and I could not give the last credit to it, though this author affirms he had the fact from the Egyptians themselves. What he says of it is this: "The prodigious expence which that building required, was the reason that Cheopes, who wanted money, abandoned himself to that degree of ignominy, as to prostitute his own daughter at a certain house for sake of gain. This daughter not only performed her father's command, but thought also of a method to leave some monument that might render her famous to succeeding ages. With this view she desired every one of her visitors to give her a stone to erect a building which she had designed. And I have been told, that of those stones was built that pyramid, which is the middlemost of the three, opposite to the great one, and which is one hundred and fifty feet in front every way *."

I can't imagine, dear Monceca, how Herodotus could determine himself to tell so improbable a story with so much gravity; for tho' he only committed to writing a thing that others had told him, he ought to have mentioned it as a vulgar tale, and to have refuted it as soon as he had related it. How is it likely that a beauty which was so common as to be able to amass the quantity of stones necessary for the foundation and basis of the pyramid, should always remain charming enough to find lovers so fond as to defray the expences of this stately building? At first sight one would think a stone was no great matter; and that the favours of a fine lady could not be obtained upon cheaper terms: But if it be considered, that

* Herodotus's History, Book I. p. 152.

this stone was to be of marble granate, and that the quarry from which it was to be fetch'd, was near two hundred leagues off; it must be confess'd that they who furnish'd the last stones would pay very dear for the favours of a very common beauty. The antient Egyptians were not delicate, perhaps in the affair of love; but it cannot be deny'd that they were generous to excess.

These pyramids were formerly in all appearance, faced with marble; but it is plain they are not so now: And their sovereigns who had occasion for marble, chose rather to strip those monuments of it, than to be obliged to send very far for it.

The Arabian authors give a pleasant account of the origin of the pyramids: They affirm that they were built long before the flood by a nation of giants, each of whom carried from the quarries to the place where the pyramids are, a stone of twenty or twenty-five foot long, with as much ease as a man carries a book under his arm †; and consequently it must have been less trouble to build a pyramid, than for a child to build a castle with cards; but an unlucky accident happen'd to one of those giants. In one of our former letters to thee I mention'd that famous pillar of Pompey, the largest and the tallest in the world. The giant who carry'd it under his arm, and who, to give himself ease, chang'd it from under one arm to the other, broke one of his ribs in the action for want of due care in his motion: However, this did not hinder him from performing his journey; for he arriv'd with his packet under his arm, and had his rib set to rights by a skillful surgeon.

Take one story with another, dear Monceca; I like that of Herodotus much better than that of the Arabians. I could wish that men would treat one another with a little more respect, and that the historians would not so undervalue the human race as to think it capable of giving credit to such ridiculous romances. The generality of writers seem to abuse

† Mallet's Account of Egypt, part I. p. 104

their privilege of transmitting certain facts to posterity. They disguise them, they accomodate them to their own humour, and leave to future generations a chimerical collection of their own ideas, rather than a true account of what has pass'd. All nations have a great number of historians, intollerable compilers of fables. The Turks have the expounders of their laws; the Jews their rabbies; and the Nazarenes their monks. Whoever has a mind to study history, cannot be too careful in the choice of the authors that he takes for his guide. The first prejudices that are conceived in historical matters, are as difficult to be eradicated as those in Questions relating to philosophy. There is the same prepossession for an historian as for a philosopher; and 'tis as vicious an extreme to give an implicit faith to Herodotus, as blindly to adopt all the sentiments of Aristotle. It requires judgment and discernment to improve by the reading of the best authors; for there are no books but what in some passages favour of human frailty, which one should endeavour to find out, and to supply the defect by the opinion of such as oppose them in that instance.

I am now reading those volumes which thou sent'st me from Paris; and am making the best use I can of those wise precautions. The Marseilles merchant who was the bearer of thy letters, acquainted me in his, of an adventure that happen'd some time ago in his country, which I thought perfectly entertaining, and therefore I send it to thee in his own words.

L E T T E R.

“ S I R,

“ **Y**OU won't be angry, perhaps, if I acquaint you with a very comical accident that happen'd in a famous procession that was made here some days ago. The monks had a mind to build an altar in the street, to repose the shrines on, which were carry'd through the town. They therefore raised a

kind of dome, supported by pillars of wood, cover'd with branches of trees, like an harbour; under which was form'd a grotto hung with leaves; and in this they were to place the image of St. Mary Magdalen. That it might have as near a resemblance as possible with the original, they undress'd a young virgin of fifteen, and put her in a posture which they thought the most proper to represent the expiring saint. She was laid on a bed of turf, cover'd with nothing but hair; which was so artfully order'd, that few parts of her body were left naked and exposed to sight. This young creature was thus undress'd, because they pretended in Provence, that St. Magdalen had no other vestment or covering but her hair in the cave of St. Bawm; and this animated statute was order'd to stir as little as possible. The procession march'd in order along by the altar; and the bishop having commanded the relics of this saint to be rested on it, for some moments, the statue, forgetting the task that was enjoin'd her, and being touch'd with a fit of devotion, fell on her knees in her grotto; upon which the locks of hair that she was cover'd with fell off, and the fair damsel remaining in the pure state of nature, offer'd to the sight of the spectators such lively beauties as were nothing like those of a dying person. The bishop, a truly pious prelate, was very much scandaliz'd at the impertinence and folly of the monks; and to punish them for the performance of so senseless a project, has interdicted them, and he seems to be so enrag'd, that it will be a long time, perhaps, before he restores the powers of administering, which he has taken away from them."

I know not, dear Monceca, what thou wilt think of this adventure, which I own made me very merry. I plainly see the folly of the monks in an action so ridiculous.

The Coptic priests in this country do something like it every year, to the honour of one of their patriarchs whom they revere as a saint. A man quite
naked

naked appears on a tomb, and there delivers a discourse in praise of the deceas'd. All the successors of this Coptic pontiff hold him in great veneration; and say, that his manners were as pure as those of the angels. Certain it is, that the patriarchs who are chosen in these days, have scarce any resemblance of this saint. They abuse the religion of which they are the depositaries, make sale of the permissions which they grant, and deny none for money: So that there is nothing which a Coptic priest may not authorise, by virtue of his credit with the people. Divorces are very common with the Coptes. When a man is discontented with his wife, or when a woman complains that she does not like her husband, the patriarch separates them without searching into the cause of the disagreement, or endeavouring to reconcile them, for fear of losing the fees which he gets by such separations; a part of the revenues of this pontiff arising from the misunderstandings betwixt men and their wives.

The European priests would certainly be much richer than they are, if they enjoy'd such a prerogative: What treasures would roll into their coffers! And what marriages would be broke, if the Nazarenes were possess'd of that power! I imagine, that if the sovereign pontiff had a mind to renew the ancient croisades, he need only grant a licence to the adventurers to throw off the wedding-garment, and he might have a more numerous army than that which Xerxes conducted against the Greeks. In my opinion, 'tis the only method now left for carrying on such unsuccessful and ruinous wars as the Nazarene princes formerly made in those climates. Yet in the time of those croisades, the Europeans ran in crowds, and abandon'd their own country, to be knock'd on the head in another which it was impossible for them to keep: Nay, so mad were they for undertaking these voyages, that the very women took the cross on them for those holy wars, and chose to bear a part in the fatigues. There was a number of ladies of the first rank at Genoa that buckled on the military harness, and

and resolv'd to depart for Egypt. having a monk at their head for their officer, the very man who rais'd this charming recruit. The Roman pontiff, wrote a very long letter to them upon this head, which began thus: "To his noble and dear daughters in Christ, the noble ladies Carmindini, Ghifulsi, Grimaldi, &c. We have heard by your letters, as well as by others address'd to us, from our most dear son, Philip of Savona, lecturer of the order of friars minors, that you and many other Genoese women, inspir'd by God, have resolv'd to go to the Holy Land, &c." What think'st thou, dear Monceca, of such a squadron as this of the Genoese women? Was not their part very edifying?

Farewell, dear Monceca, and live content and happy.

L E T T E R LXXXVII.

The doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls considered.— Arguments for and against it.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Cairo—

OF all the antient philosophical doctrines, dear Monceca, that which has been most despis'd in Europe of late was most adher'd to by the antients, and is so still by the Indians. The doctrine of the Metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, which Pythagoras taught, was adopted and received by several great genius's. Plato maintain'd it. Ovid* and

* *Mente Deos adiit, et quæ natura negabat
Visibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris hausit.*

Ovid. Metam. lib. xv.

" i. e. He, tho' from heav'n remote, to heaven could move,
With strength of mind, and tread th' abyss above;
And penetrate with his interior light,
Those upper depths which nature hid from sight.

Translated by Mr. Dryden.

To this elogium of Pythagoras must be added that of his system, where

and Virgil †, in many places of their works, declar'd themselves in its favour. And the Siamese philosophers and the Brachmans are convinc'd of it.

It seems surprising at first sight, that so false a system should have such a currency, and find adherents for so many centuries, whilst the other erroneous opinions of the antient philosophers fell into oblivion or contempt. But when one carefully enquires into the sentiments of Pythagoras, and strips them of all the absurdities with which they are charg'd by those who have confuted them, 'tis not so great a wonder that they have continued. The error of the persons who have adhered to them is to be lamented; but as 'twas owing to deceitful delusions, capable of seducing those of the best sense, their failing is to be excus'd.

The

where he fortifies the mind against the fear of death.

O! genus attonitum gelidæ formidine mortis, &c.

Ovid. Metam. lib. xv

Why thus affrighted at an empty name,

A dream of darkness, and fictitious flame?

Vain themes of wit, which but in poems pass,

And fables of a world that never was!

What feels the body when the soul expires,

By time corrupted, or consum'd by fires?

† O pater! Anne aliquas ad cælum hinc ire putandum est, &c.

Virg. Æneid. lib. vi.

i. e. O father! can it be that souls sublime

Return to visit our terrestrial clime!

And that the gen'rous mind releas'd by death

Can covet lazy limbs, and mortal breath?

Anchises then in order thus begun

To clear those wonders to his godlike son:

Know first that heav'n and earth's compacted frame,

And flowing waters and the starry flame,

And both the radiant lights, one common soul

Inspires and feeds and animates the whole.

This active mind, infus'd thro' all the space,

Unites and mingles with the mighty mass.

Hence men and beasts the breath of life obtain,

And birds of air and monsters of the main:

Th' etherial vigour is in all the same,

And every soul is fill'd with equal flame:

As

The arguments that have determin'd certain philosophers to believe the Metempsychosis, are so difficult to be confuted, that the Nazarene doctors who have attempted it, have only added new weight to them. A man must not only be a good, but an excellent Metaphysician, intirely to defeat the system of Pythagoras. This work, reserv'd for the Descartes's, the Lockes, and the Bayles, is above the capacity of the schoolmen. A Jesuit has shew'd us the arguments which he and his brethren make use of to convince the Indians of the errors of the Metempsychosis; but they are so weak, and so easy to be confuted, that those people must be very silly, or very ignorant of the principles of Nazarenism, if they don't demolish them root and branch. Not to mention a summary of Pythagoras's system, I will only shew thee, dear monceca, that of the Indians, after which I will answer the objection of the Jesuits; and I hope to prove to thee that I was not mistaken, when I said they are far from being unanswerable.

The Brachmans lay it down for the first principle that all good actions ought to be rewarded by the

As much as earthy limbs, and gross allay
Of mortal members subject to decay,
Blunt not the beams of heav'n, and edge of day.
From this coarse mixture of terrestrial parts
Desire and fear, by turns, possess their hearts,
And grief and joy; nor can the groveling mind,
In the dark dungeon of the limbs confin'd,
Assert the native skies, or own its heav'nly kind.
Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains,
But long-contracted filth ev'n in the soul remains.
Then are they happy, when by length of time
The scurf is worn away of each committed crime.
No speck is left of their habitual stains;
But the pure æther of the soul remains.
But when a thousand rolling years are past,
(So long their punishments and penance last)
Whole droves of minds are by the driving god
Compell'd to drink the deep Lethean flood.
In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares
Of their past labours, and their irksome years;
That unremembring of its former pain,
The soul may suffer mortal flesh again."

Deity

Deity, and that all bad ones ought by the Deity to be punish'd. "The wisdom of God say they, requires this order. His justice demands absolutely that he should punish wickedness, and reward virtue. By consequence no innocent man can be punish'd, no guilty one be rewarded. Now how comes it then that it happens every day, that a man without deserving it is oppress'd with misfortunes, from the day of his birth to that of his death? Why do we see others enjoy happiness without interruption? It must surely be, that by some actions previous to their birth, those who are unhappy deserv'd their misfortunes, and the happy deserv'd their good fortunes." Thus therefore is the necessity of the Metempsychosis evidently prov'd.

I will add something, dear Monceca; to the Indian philosopher's argument. The Divinity cannot be the author of evil; for 'tis directly opposite to the essence of a Being sovereignly good and sovereignly perfect. God could not be the source of any misfortune attending an infant not yet stain'd with any crime. You are under a necessity therefore of admitting two first principles, one good which dispenses happiness, and the other bad which diffuses its venom upon the creatures, or you must confess the Metempsychosis.

The Jesuit, in answer to this argument could not have recourse to the transgression of Adam. For the Indian may very justly say to him: "Your argument is only a begging of the question. You found your proofs upon such as I don't admit of. I deny that there was an Adam form'd by the divinity*. The circulation of souls is eternal; it ever was, and ever will be."

* Some learned Indians pretend that there are three things which are eternal, viz. the supreme God, Souls, and Generations; which they express by these three words Padi, Pachou, Pajum; and that by going back from the son to the father, from the father to the grandfather, from the grandfather to the great-grandfather, and so on, it will be impossible to find a beginning. See father Bouchet's letter on the Metempsychosis, in the Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Idolators. Tome ii. p. 181.

Those with whom 'tis disputed cannot urge the fall of the first man, as the cause of the happiness and misery of mankind, without admitting our sacred books to be authentic. Now, the moment that an Indian agrees that what is written in *Genesis* was reveal'd by the Divinity, he must be convinc'd of the error of the *Metempsychosis*. But when he denies the authority of this book, it would be ridiculous to offer to make use of it, to prove the causes of moral good and evil to him.

'Tis extremely difficult, dear Monceca, to convince a learned Indian by arguments that shew him the true causes of human misfortunes, while he ascribes them to the faults committed by souls in the course of a former life. The arguments which the Nazarene missionaries make use of are pitiful: "I demand of the idolators, says a Jesuit †, whether all the beings that are in the world ought to be alike? Ought there to be nothing but suns and stars? Is it not requisite for the well-being of the universe, that all the parts which compose it should be subordinate to one another, and that all its Beings should have a different situation? In this they are agreed. You must own then, say I that the case is the same with the moral world; that all cannot be kings; and that, for the sake of good order there must be a subordination," In reply to these general arguments, an Indian may say, "I grant that good order demands there must be a subordination in the different states of the world, tho' I might deny it with good reason, if I had not a mind to shorten the dispute. For, as God could have made all men equally happy, if he had pleas'd, good order might have subsisted, tho' there had been an equality betwixt them, since God had need to have done nothing more for this end than to create them all virtuous. Then laws, princes, magistrates and judges, would have been insignificant; and, by consequence, subordination would have been of use no longer. But 'tis a more substantial evil

† Bouchet, p. 181. at the end.

than this, which I exclaim against. Your comparison of the sun and stars with happy and unhappy mortals, is not just. Though the moon is less than the sun, yet tis not unfortunate; tis not sensible of the pains of the gout and gravel; tis not tormented by hunger and thirst; it does not fear the loss of sight or hearing; tis insensible; all the splendor of the sun does not give it the least trouble, nor the least sense of pain: But tis not so with mankind. Their misfortunes are real. The haughtiness and cruelty of a sovereign, the dishonesty of judges, distempers, plagues oppress them. If they had not deserved those misfortunes in a former life, the order which the Divinity has established in the moral world would be as bad, as that which it has established in the planets is worthy of admiration. To assert that God has not the power of hindering evil, is not so contrary to reason, nor so impious, as to believe him the author of it *."

I shall go on dear Monceca, with the examination of the Jesuit's arguments. "The doctrine of the Indians, says he †, furnishes us with a demonstration to which they have no reply. The principal reason why they admit of a Metempsychosis is the necessity of atoning for the sins of the past life. Now, according to their system, nothing is more easy than atonement for sins: All their books are full of the special favours which accrue from the pronounciation of these three names, Chiva, Rama, Harigara. The very first time that they are pronounced, all sins are cancelled; and if they are pronounced three times, the Gods whom they thereby honour, are at a loss to find a reward that can be adequate to the merit of the action. Then the souls, being gorged as it were with merits, are no longer obliged to animate new bodies, but go directly to Devenderen's Palace of Glory. There is scarce an Indian that has any devotion at all but pronounces these names above thirty

* Plut. advers. Stoicos, p. 1076. E.

† Father Bouchet's Letter, &c.

times a day. Some pronounce them a thousand times, and thus compel the Gods to confess that they are not able to pay. Moreover, sins are cancelled with the same ease, by bathing in certain rivers and ponds, by giving charity to the Brachmans, by making pilgrimages, by reading the Ramagenam, by celebrating festivals to the honour of the Gods, &c. This being so, there is no person in the Indies but goes out of this world laden with merits, and without the least stain of sin. Now, if there be no longer any sins to expiate, what can be the service of a Metempsychosis?

If the Indians, dear Monceca, are puzzled to answer the objections of the Jesuits, they must be void of common sense, or else they must know nothing at all of the doctrines of the Nazarene faith. I will, for once put myself in the place of a Brachman; and I say to the missionary, "Dear European, I perceive that the people of your country blow hot and cold, and that they alternately adopt and reject certain customs, according as they are favourable to the opinions which they endeavour to prove. You condemn our custom of pronouncing the names Chiva, Rama, Harigara. You say, that because they remit sins all souls must go to heaven, and never return again to the earth. But pray tell me what's the use of Purgatory, which you believe, or at least which you say you believe? Your sovereign pontiffs have found an hundred thousand expedients by the name of indulgences, to exempt the Nazarenes from it. Of these, how many different sorts there are: Some serve for 3000 years, other for 10000; nay, there are some which clear all scores, and these are as easy to be had as those which are obtained by pronouncing the words Chiva, Rama, Harigara. The pontiffs have even granted indulgences to the fashion of bidding good-morrow*. Every man who says in

* That foreigners and travellers may have a share in the indulgences. There's not a Cabaret, i. e. Tavern or Victualling-House, in Italy, but the bull by which they are granted is fixed up at the door: And care has been taken to translate from the Latin, and to print it in Italian

Italy to the first person that he meets in the morning, "Sia laudata Maria, i. e. Praised be Mary," gains 1000 years indulgences; and he that answers Amen, gains 500 years. There is not an Italian that has the least spark of devotion but what gives forty good-morrows in a morning. This in the style of indulgences is 40000 years of pardons, exclusive of 20000 which he gets by answering Amen, to those who are beforehand with him in pronouncing this happy Laudata. Moreover, the sins of the Nazarenes are cancell'd by waving the arms of the priests and friars over the head, by giving them presents, by going in pilgrimage to Loretto, by reading the lives of St. Ignatius, St. Theresa, and St. Dominic, and celebrating festivals in honour of the saints. This being the case, there's not one of them but what departs this life with merit in abundance, and without the least stain of sin. But when there are no more sins to atone for, of what service can purgatory be? Explain to me, my dear European, what tis good for. And when you have demonstrated this to me, I will draw convincing proofs from it to inforce the necessity of the Metempsychosis. No doubt you will tell me, that indulgences operate no further than as they are obtained by persons who are in a state of grace, or are sincerely penitent for all their sins; and that 500000 Laudata's, &c. will not give one moment's exemption from pain to such as have not deserved the effect of the indulgence. This is the case with the words Chiava, Rama, Harigara. They are of no service farther than as they are pronounced by persons, who have a sincere compunction for their faults. But since there are few that are so, the Metempsychosis is absolutely necessary. You'll ask, perhaps, of what use are those names, since they are of no efficacy when they are not pronounced by persons that are truly sorry and penitent for their faults, and since repentance alone wipes out all crimes? I will own, that I can't comprehend of what use they can be any more than indulgences; but our priests assure us of their power, and why should not we be in the right to believe our

heavenly guides, since you think it your duty to give credit to yours? What preference ought to be given to the *Laudata*, &c. over *Chiava*, *Rama*, *Harigara*, can only be determined by knowing whether there is a greater secret virtue in the disposition of the letters in the first words than in the latter. As to this difficulty, I think you have no reason to give me that is more evident than what you assigned as to the cause of mens unhappiness. Therefore, since I am persuaded that the Divine Being could not take pleasure in making creatures unhappy, and since my natural reason tells me this would be contradictory to his essence, you'll give me leave, my dear European, to believe that men are punished in this life, for the transgressions they committed in a former. You will also have the goodness to indulge me in the use of the *Chiava*, *Rama*, *Harigara*, and the washing of sins in rivers, for the sake of the purgative gesticulation, and the indulgenced good-morrows, of which you have my free consent to remain in the peaceable, and quiet possession."

I can't imagine, dear *Monceca*, what answer a Jesuit can make to an Indian that starts these objections to him. He could have no expedient left but to have recourse to sound philosophy, to make use of all the discoveries which the great men of these later ages have made concerning the nature of the souls of men, and those of beasts; and to prove by excellent physical reasons, that the *Metempsychosis* is repugnant to the essence of things; that by consequence there can be no such thing; that there is but a certain number of souls: that therefore it would sometimes happen either that there would be bodies wanting, or souls destitute of bodies; because it is contrary to the essence and to the order established in things, to endeavour to fix the number of children that are to be born, since this depends on the free-will granted to mankind. This gives a fair occasion, dear *Monceca*, for enforcing the axiom of *Mallebranche*; "That God acts always by the simplest method." But a Jesuit had rather argue weakly than
be

be under any obligation to a Cartesian philosopher, and especially to a Cartesian orator. If Descartes, or Loeke, had been members of the society, their writings would have been explained at this day, in the college of Lewis le Grand; and if Bourdaloue had been a Benedictin, even the lay-brethren of the Jesuits would criticise his sermons with impudence and impunity.

Farewell, dear Monceca; live content and happy; and may the God of our fathers crown thee with prosperity.

L E T T E R XCVIII.

The customs of a people called the Aufes, with regard to women.—Some thoughts on the hardship of the laws in certain countries, touching illegitimate children.—At the marriage of a Nasamones woman, all the men invited to the feast, lie with her the first night.—Onis is in favour of divorces on some occasions, and even justifies plurality of wives.

ISAAC ONIS to AARON MONCECA.

Egypt.—

A Voyage I have made up the Nile, dear Monceca, hindered me from answering thy letters sooner, of which I found several at my return to Cairo, that gave me infinite pleasure; so that I read them several times over, and the oftener I perused them, the more I discovered in them of amusement and instruction. An Arabian, with whom I have scraped an acquaintance in this country, and who was my fellow-traveller, has conceived a real esteem for thee, upon some of thy letters that I shewed to him. He agrees, that tis impossible to acquire the wisdom which the philosophers courted with so much care, but by a profound study of the heart of man; and of this there's no knowing the secret recesses but by examining it under divers forms.

There's a prodigious difference between the sentiments of the Egyptian, and those of a Parisian. They are both indeed agitated by the principal passions common to all mankind ; but these assume so many different forms in their hearts, and they produce effects so different, that there's no knowing of men in the general, by the idea only of the manners of a single nation.

A Sicilian who was never out of Messina, or a Mahometan that never stirr'd out of Constantinople, fancy adultery to be a horrible crime, and a thing to which the mind of man could never incline voluntarily. Consequently they are ignorant to what lengths the caprice and strange fancies of men will run : For if they had been in many countries, they would know, that by the laws of several nations women are common.

'Tis not only in our time that we find whole nations living after the manner of beasts, and having to do with one another, without distinction †. "The Auses," says Herodotus †, "have no women in particular, but they associate with all indifferently, after the manner of beasts. The men assemble together every three months ; and when the children are grown up under their mothers, to be strong enough to go alone, they are carry'd to this assembly, and the men to whom they first address themselves are reputed their fathers."

Is not this a fine proof of legitimacy ? But really as ridiculous as this custom is, I should prefer it to the barbarous law of the Nazaranes, which proscribes men from the moment they draw breath, and condemns them by the name of Bastards, to perpetual infamy. Is there any thing so contrary to nature as the custom which has introduc'd a difference between the legitimate and illegitimate children, as if the one had not a father as well as the other, and as if both

† Peter de la Valle, tome I. p. 140.

† History of Herodotus, lib. iv. p. 313.

were not capable of having the same virtues, and of being alike useful to society?

I think the laws of the Mahometans much more reasonable than those of the Nazarenes; for they don't put a father under a necessity of rendering his child unhappy; and a son born of a Circassian woman is upon as good a footing as one whose mother is a Turk or an Egyptian.

Laws are only good and just as far as they are conformable to the law of nature, from whence they all ought to flow, as from their first principle. There is not a more able lawyer than that internal sentiment within us, which the Divine Being has engrav'd in our hearts, in characters that are indelible †. Be a legislator ever so learned, he forfeits my esteem for him from the moment that he introduces customs and rules contrary to the maxims of the law of nature; and I look upon his arguments as those of a subtle sophist, that tend to obscure the truth, and to smother reason.

If, by this principle, we examine all the laws that have been made to proscribe certain innocent creatures from their very birth, we shall find them not only absurd, but even contrary to humanity. What! a father has a child, whom he acknowledges to be his own, and that he gave him birth; and forsooth, because his mother did not join in certain ceremonies to which men have been pleas'd to give the name of marriage, the son, when grown up, must be look'd upon as infamous; the love of his parents shall be charg'd to him as a capital crime, and he must not share the honours of a civil life! 'Tho' it has been endeavour'd to repair this injustice in part, by Legitimation, yet the very persons whose misfortunes they thereby endeavour to diminish, will be deem'd inferior to the generality of mankind. Therefore 'tis one

† *Conscientia, says Tertullian, potest obumbrari, quia non est Deus; extingui non potest, quia a Deo est: i. e. Conscience may be obscur'd, because it is not God; but cannot be quite extinguish'd, because it is from God.*

of the greatest mistakes of the human understanding: I much rather prefer the custom of the Auses, who first of all acknowledge their children to be the republic's in general, and then leave it to their instinct to decide the choice of their respective fathers.

If we go back to the primitive ages, we shall find that the patriarchs made no manner of difference between the children born of their wives or their concubines. Jacob after having marry'd two sisters, had children by two concubines of their own procuring; yet we don't find that the patriarch made any difference between his children. They were all alike heads of tribes; and we that are descended from those tribes have retain'd the wise custom of not branding those children with infamy that we have by our mistresses: But the great acquaintance which we have contracted in some countries with the Nazarenes, has in a manner communicated some of their prejudices to several of our brethren.

How different soever be the opinions of certain people, as to the condition of children born of concubines, we shall find them much more opposite to one another in several other customs. How would a jealous Italian reconcile himself to the ceremonies us'd at the marriages of the Nasamones, a people of Libya? "The first night of their wedding," says Herodotus, "the bride goes round to all that were at the feast to lie with her; and when every one has enjoy'd her, he gives her a present*." I don't believe that a jealous Sicilian could easily conform to this ceremony, and that he would chuse to get a very considerable fortune upon such terms. Nevertheless this fashion, which appears so extraordinary to us, is still the custom, at least in some measure, among the savage nations of America†; and those very people who seem to have such wild notions, have several other customs however, which are worthy of the most civiliz'd and best disciplin'd republics. The antient Nasamones, whom

* The History of Herodotus, lib. iv. p. 310.

† The Voyages of Peter de la Valle, Tome I. p. 110.

I have been treating of, had so great an esteem for virtue, that when they took an oath, they always laid their hand upon the tombs of such as they reckon'd the men of the greatest justice and honour †.

If it be in thy power, dear Monceca, account for this oddness of conduct; reconcile, if thou canst, such wise notions with the extravagance of making a new marry'd woman lie with all the men that were at her wedding. I am certain dear Monceca, that after thou hast duly reflected on such extraordinary behaviour, thou wilt confess, that 'tis impossible to know to what point men may carry their errors and their prejudices; and that 'tis absolutely necessary for a man who would have a just idea of their tempers, and strange inclinations, to travel to the most distant countries, and study mankind in the manners and customs of the most differing nations. By this means one attains to the knowledge of what all the reflections in the world cannot teach a person that never went abroad. 'Tis true, that a scholar who keeps close to his study, and takes care to inform himself, has the assistance of books that were written by travellers: But nevertheless, he can't by all his reading know so much as he who has seen those countries of which he gives the description. I look upon a man of learning, who is acquainted with the manners of people by his travels, in the same light as I do a skilful painter that always draws from the life; whereas he who has no information but what he gets from books, is like him that copies after plates which are often incorrect.

When some years have been spent in travelling thro' the several countries, 'tis necessary for a person who would reap any considerable benefit from the things which he has seen, to make reflections upon certain particulars which often made less impression upon us than some others, because we were prepossess'd with them before we travell'd, but do nevertheless point out the manners and ways of thinking of such nations. So when a Frenchman goes to Constantinople, he

† History of Herodotus, lib. iv. p. 310.

seldom gives much attention to the use of the plurality of wives. He knew before, when he was in France, that the Turks had seraglio's. He will be more curious to inform himself of certain particulars relating to the inside of these seraglio's, and which scarce serve any farther for his instruction than to make him seriously reflect upon what may have induc'd the Mahometans to take several wives, and to compare their arguments with those of the Nazarenes, who are allow'd but one.

'Tis certain that a philosopher, who without prejudice examines the customs of the Turks, and those of the Nazarenes, will find those of the former much more agreeable to reason, as to what relates to the multiplicity of wives, and the divorce of those that they have any cause to complain of. The Mahometans have made a ceremony of marriage, which serves to render man happy three different ways. They may, according to their law, have three wives; the first may serve to bring them kindred; and as the women that they marry for the sake of having their protection, seldom bring fortunes with 'em, they find in the second the wealth that was wanting in the first. Finally, they may in the third only gratify their taste; and after having taken care of getting fortunes and protection, follow the desires of their own hearts.

If marriage is only a band between two persons of different sexes, in order for their living happy, and being useful to society, three fourths of the marriages of the Nazarenes are matches as pernicious to the public good as they are chargeable to those that form'd them. When a woman is barren, she and her husband become in some measure useless to the state. By a law which is absurd and senseless, a husband is punish'd without having deserv'd it, for the offences of his wife. He must not hope to enjoy the comfortable name of father whilst she lives. After this, ought we to wonder at the bad conduct of the Nazarenes, and the criminal excesses of which some of them are guilty?

If it were allow'd in France, England, Germany, &c. for a man to marry a second wife when the first is incapable of being a mother, or to divorce her when her temper does not suit with his, how many extravagant debaucheries, and horrid crimes, might be avoided? for then two persons, who perhaps with one another dead, and cannot bear with each other, would be permitted to seek others with whom they might live more cordially.

The Nazarenes not only condemn divorce, but even polygamy, as a very great crime. I can't imagine upon what they found the custom of having but one wife, and how they can think the Deity is offended by the plurality of wives. 'Tis a custom which they have deriv'd from the Pagans *, and which they have compell'd us to submit to in the countries where they are the masters. For among the Israelites our forefathers, the plurality of wives was always tolerated as useful, not only to private persons, but also to the republic. The Nazarenes believe our sacred books: Why then do they oppose those customs which they there find authoriz'd by the greatest men? Did not Jacob take two sisters in marriage at the same time; and had not he moreover two concubines? David the royal prophet, whose sacred hymns are sung with a loud voice in all the temples of the Nazarenes, whether papists or reformed, made choice of a young woman in the last days of his life that were devoted to repentance; and the number of concubines which his son Solomon had was equal to his wealth. He was the richest prince of his time in gold and silver; and in his palace was the greatest number of women. I know, dear Monceca, that we don't give into the superstition of the Nazarenes, and that with us, who are strict observers of the law of Moses, adultery is the only amorous pleasure that we are forbid to take; but nevertheless we are forc'd to submit, and we have in a manner adopted the custom of the Nazarenes.

* The old Romans.

Farewell,

Farewell, dear Monceca ; and live content and happy.

LETTER XCIX.

A description of the cities of -Liege and Aix-la-Chapelle ; their government and the manners of the people.—Aix-la-Chapelle rebuilt by Charlemagne, after being demolished and sack'd by Attila.—A story of the resurrection of two Pontiffs at the dedication of the church at Aix.—Great abundance of relics in this country.—An account of a ridiculous procession in Provence.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Aix-la-Chapelle.—

BEfore I went to Holland, I was willing to see Liege and Aix-la-Chapelle, two neighbouring towns in Brabant, which I was assur'd were worth a traveller's observation ; and I am not sorry that I have spent ten or twelve days in satisfying my curiosity.

Liege is a very large and populous city, adorn'd with some fine buildings, tho' they are not many. The Pontiff is the sovereign of it, and his clergy share with him in the authority. Heretofore this chapter consisted of the first noblemen in Europe : And there was not a Cannon (which is a name that the Nazarenes give to certain priests) but what was of some eminent family. When that sovereign pontiff of Rome, call'd Innocent II. crown'd the emperor Lothorius, the Canons that were at that ceremony were, for the most part, of royal extraction. There were among them nine sons of kings, fourteen sons of dukes who were sovereign princes, twenty-nine counts of the holy empire, and eight barons. All those lords and princes are now metamorphos'd into mean burghers ; and as soon as a man is dubbed a doctor of the university of Louvain, he may be admitted a canon of Liege, and a member of its sovereign

reign council. 'Tis true that he has only the prerogative of commanding the wickedest people in the universe; the Neapolitan populace being very reserv'd, and very regular, with regard to that of Liege. They both deserve alike to be the neighbours of Mount Vesuvius; and some earthquakes would do as much good to the Liegeois as to the Neapolitans: For be the former ever so wicked, yet they pretend they have a number of protectors in the deities presence, who, in consideration of so many pounds of incense and wax per ann. easily procure them the pardon of their crimes. These protectors come sometimes to visit them, and to shew them what mines of coal there are in the earth. One of the saints who had the care of the affairs of the Liegeois in charge at the court of heaven, enter'd the city upon a certain day, in the habit of a pilgrim; and after he had beckon'd to one of the burghers to follow him, and discover'd a mine to him, he vanish'd. He thereby did great service to the Liegeois; for since the discovery of those mines, a great many armourers have settled in the country, where they carry on a very considerable trade. The coal extract'd from these mines is called Houille, from a certain farrier, called Prudhomme le Houilloux; to whom the guardian saint of the Liegeois address'd himself. But as to the burghers and nobles here, they are as valuable as the vulgar are despiseable; for they are polite, and ready to do good offices. The manners of the one are quite different from those of the other: So that when I speak to thee of the Liegeois, I mean the people in general.

The inhabitants of Aix-la-Chapelle, from whence I now write to thee, are much more civil and courteous. This is a large city, and still very beautiful; tho' it has lost part of its lustre by several fires, by which it was twice or thrice almost intirely destroy'd. After it had been demolish'd and sack'd by Attila, 'twas rebuilt by Charlemagne, who declar'd it the capital of Gallia Transalpina, and chose it for the place of his ordinary residence. He caus'd the great

church to be built, in which he lies interr'd; and his tomb is still to be seen there. I have been positively assured by some Nazarenes, that at the time of the dedication of this church, two pontiffs, who had been a long time in their graves, took the trouble of rising again, to be witnesses of this august ceremony. They set out from heaven betimes in the morning, arriv'd about nine of the clock at Aix-la-Chapelle, assisted at the divine service, dined with all the prelates whom Charlemagne had invited that day to a sumptuous feast; and set out again about four of the clock in the afternoon for heaven; where they arriv'd just at shutting the gate. This is travelling to some purpose!

These things ought not to astonish thee, dear Isaac; for the Nazarenes gives out stories that are yet more absurd. They say, that in a certain chest, which is preserv'd in the church of Aix-la-Chapelle, they have the very manna that fell from heaven into the desert, for the nourishment of the Israelites; and the leaves and blossoms of Aaron's rod, which flourish'd miraculously in the tabernacle. If any one of our Rabbies had wrote, that such relics are kept in a certain synagogue of the Levant, how many banterers should not we not have felt from a posse of Nazarene doctors? What have they not said, and perhaps with reason too, concerning many things that there are in the Talmud? Tho' I don't believe there is any thing extraordinary in that work, which the sensible part of the Jews swallow without certain restrictions, and without giving it some explanations which excuse the text in places where it seems to be faulty.

The manna in the desert, and Aaron's buds, are not the only remarkable things that are shewn in this country. There's a surprising quantity of little splinters of bones, locks of hair, and shreds of stuffs, in cases of gold and silver; which are held in such veneration, that some of them are sent from hence to do honour to the coronation of emperors. The magistrate of the city carries these venerable scraps, in ceremony

ceremony, from one end of Germany to the other, together with the sword and belt of Charlemagne; which is not one of the most inconsiderable relics of this place. The emperors were formerly crown'd at Aix-la-Chapelle; and most of Charlemagne's successors chose also to be crown'd here. At length Charles IV absolutely settled this affair by one of the constitutions of the Golden Bull; wherein it was ordain'd, that the emperors should be first crown'd here; but 'tis not so now. And the only ceremony which is still kept up is, that some person is deputed to the magistrates, to give them advice of an approaching election, to the end that they may send the imperial ornaments and relics that I have mention'd to thee. After this, the emperor, in whatsoever place he be crown'd, declares, that particular reasons hinder'd him from repairing to Aix-la-Chapelle; and that he does not thereby propose to infringe the prerogative of this city, or to deprive it of its privileges. This done, the emperor is styled a Canon of Aix, and is sworn as such on the day of his coronation. Then the magistrate carries back the belt, the sword, and all the miraculous tackle; which is every bit of it replaced in the vestry of the church; where the curious may not see it without money; and tho' honest Charlemagne has been now dead above nine hundred years; yet his bones and his garments have still the power of exacting a fee from the purses of all strangers.

I wonder that, among so many sacred relics of antiquity, they have not the club of that honest pontiff Turpin, so well known in the antient chronicles of Charlemagne. The head of that excellent nag of his nephew Roland, might also have gracefully had a place there, tho' it was not endued with the talent of the fairies, like to Renaud's; for Ariosto and Boyardo have shifted him into so many different hands, that it would have been too difficult to have made the piece appear to be genuine and real; whereas honest Roland lost his horse but once, and found it as luckily again, as Sancho Pancha did

his ass. This same Roland was very fortunate in finding what he had lost; for his cousin Astolphus brought him back his good sense, which was carefully preserv'd in a bottle in paradise, and deliver'd to him by St. John, with his own hands. If the good sense of every Nazarene, whose brains are evaporated, were to be bottled up in paradise, all the glass-houses in the world would not be sufficient to furnish the celestial mansion with cases to hold it. And none but a supreme power can operate so great a miracle.

Tho' Aix-la-Chapelle is a great gainer by the concourse of Nazarene votaries that come to see its relics; yet its hot baths, which are reckon'd good for the most desperate diseases, are treasures to this city which are much more considerable; for a multitude of valetudinarians flock to them every year from the four parts of the world, in hopes of finding these pools as efficacious almost as that of the famous temple, which will never be restor'd till our deliverer comes upon earth.

The inhabitants of this city are courteous and polite, but very superstitious: They formerly permitted the reformed Nazarenes the free exercise of their religion; but they have now intirely suppress'd it. It was not done without the shedding of much blood; but at length the papists overpower'd their adversaries, and are now the sole masters of the city, its offices and churches. I should have been glad to have stay'd here a few days longer; but my affairs require me in Holland; so that I cannot be the spectator of what would be a charming sight for a philosopher: 'Tis a famous procession, wherein a colossal figure is carry'd, to which they give the name of Charlemagne. 'Tis accompany'd with many other extravagancies; and all the apparatus of this festival is directed by folly.

As to these processions made by the Nazarenes, while I was at Paris, the chevalier de Maisin told me the particulars of one of those pious perambulations of which he was an eye-witness, in a tour that

he

he made to Provence. He told me, that at Aix, the capital of that country, he saw a procession which which was begun by a company of chair-men, or peasants dress'd in a long black gown, encompassed with little bells, having their heads covered with a sort of paste-board head-pieces representing the figure of a devil with long horns. They carry a fork with which they hold up the train of a she-devil, who walks in the centre of them, with a comb in one hand, and a looking-glass in the other. The infernal lady, being extremely modest, and not caring to have her petticoats turn'd up, guards against it in such a manner as excites both the admiration and the mirth of the populace. After these devils, follow a number of such masqueraders, the subjects of which are borrowed from our sacred books. For instance: There's a Moses, who carries the tables of the law: and a rabble of Israelites, worshipping the golden calf. One of these masqueraders lets off a pistol, at which all the idolatrous Jews fall down as dead; and as they who act these parts have nothing on but their shirts and masks, they throw themselves into the mud in the midst of the kennels; and the more they expose their naked backsides, the more do they excite laughter and curiosity.

Among these representations, which the inhabitants of Provence call Sacred Games, there's a strapping porter dress'd like a woman, who represents the queen of Sheba going to visit Solomon. They affect to give this princess a very large rump; and her merit depends on the dimension of her bum.

Immediately behind her broad a — se, comes an Italian, to whom they give the name of duke Urban, attended by all his court, consisting of a number of peasants in the apparel of both sexes. This last masquerade would be the most antic of all, if the monks did not follow it, who walk two a-breast, and are most of them dressed even more ridiculously than the masks that go before them. The procession is closed by the shrines and busts of the canonized Na-

zarenes, which are attended by the parliament, whose presence gives such fooleries a sanction.

I was loth to believe what the chevalier de Maifin told me; for the natives of Provence don't want a genius nor penetration; and there cannot be greater delusion than to tolerate such ridiculous actions, so contrary to good-sense, and so likely to prejuice a judicious man against all that favour them. "State policy, said the chevalier to me, keeps up all these ridiculous customs. The city where this procession is made, gets above 100,000 crowns in three days time, by the great number of foreigners who come to see this festival, and purchase and consume a great quantity of provision." Avarice not only keeps up a great many superstitious customs but even multiplies the number of them every day.

Farewell, dear Isaac; live content and happy; and may the God of our fathers grant thee prosperity in abundance.

L E T T E R C.

Barcelona described.—This city is under the Spanish government, and the inhabitants not suffered to bear arms.—The reason for it.—The prerogatives of love in Spain and France compared.—A view of the Spanish theatre.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Barcelona.——

I AM at length arrived, dear Monceca, in that country where so many of our brethren have been inhumanly slaughtered and sacrificed to the avarice of the monks upon the pretence of religion, I have crossed through Roussillon, and a part of Catalonia, and I now write to thee from Barcelona, which is a large, fine and well-fortified city: But tis a very sorry harbour; so that tis not safe for ships to be there in bad weather. The Catalans mortally hate the Castilians, and had rather live under any government than that of Spain, as they have demonstrated by their several rebellions

rebellions; but they are at length reduced to such a degree that they have nothing left but the liberty of forming groundless hopes. The citadel, which has been lately built, is such a formidable curb, that Barcelona is not in a condition for any undertaking, and has nothing to trust to but its obedience and submission.

The burghers, in all the towns of Catalonia, are disarmed; and as for the peasants, they are watched still more closely, troops being always quartered up and down the villages. Such precautions indeed are a great expence and trouble to the court of Spain, but there's a necessity for it; and to do justice to the Christians, they had not acted with such severity till things were drove to the last extremity.

In the last siege of this city, the very monks were at the head of the rebels, and actually mounted guard, relieved the soldiers in the most dangerous posts, and animated them by their speeches and actions: They even gave their relics an airing upon the ramparts; and a cannon-ball or two carried off both a monk and his saint. The nuns too, though the weaker sex, chose to have a hand in the rebellion; and hung out standards, made of red cloth, at their windows, to shew that they too breathed nothing but blood and slaughter.

Consider, dear Monceca, how furious a rebellion grows when once a people take it into their heads to revolt; it gives courage to the weakest of them: And it seems, that the more heinous is the crime, the greater is their valour. Rebellious subjects often fight with more obstinacy to destroy their prince, than loyal ones do to defend and guard him from their attacks: Not that the Castilians can be reproached for having acted faintly in favour of Philip V. This monarch is obliged to love them in a twofold sense; both as his subjects, and as his children: And they always look upon him both as a good king, and as a father. But in spite of all their efforts, this good will of theirs would not have been enough, if
France

France had not put an end to the rebellion of the Catalans.

The women in this country have greater liberties than in the rest of Spain; tho' they are not so free by far as they are in France. They have, by degrees, shook off the old Spanish mode. The Duennas (or peevish old governesses) the Jalousies (or veils of crape) are no longer subsisting; or at least, what remains of all that equipage of jealousy, is nothing more than a ceremonial of very little use for the security of the husbands. The great number of French and Flemings settled at Barcelona, with the great bodies of troops that form the garrison, and are for the most part Walloons; have, by little and little, accustomed the old inhabitants of the country to bear cuckoldom with patience: Not but that there are still a great many of the Catalans, who kick and wince at the very thoughts of wearing horns; but the more care they take to avoid them, the sooner they are often intangled in the misfortune.

Gallantry is become an epidemic distemper at Barcelona; to which place the French were the importers of it: And unfortunate are they who feel the stings of it, notwithstanding all their precaution.

Although love has as ample prerogatives in Spain as in France, yet its methods of acting here are very different; and tho' the end is the same, yet the ways of attaining to it are quite contrary. In France a lover declares himself openly: He follows his mistress to the ball, to the play; and parties that are made for the country, and merry-makings, are fine opportunities for an amorous Frenchman. A Spaniard is discreet and reserved, being forced to conceal the sentiments of his heart from the public. His happiness, and the success of his intrigues, depend on secrecy. The churches are the most favourable places for him; so that every saint's day serves his purpose as well as an opera or a comedy. A mother accompanies her daughter, a husband his wife, to the play-houses; but the women go by themselves to the temples;

temples; and under the cloak of piety, love finds a loop-hole to make it amends for its constraint.

All the first assignments in Spain are made in the churches, and there they strike the final bargains; which are performed at the houses of women that pass for saints, whither young people may go without any censure. There are few Spanish ladies but have some venerable she-friend, covered with Scapularies and Agnus Dei's. A husband would be look'd upon as a fool, or which is worse, as a heretic, if it should enter his head, that Donna Mendoza, or Donna Valcabro, who are both venerable for their age, and for the rank which they have held for above twenty years in the most sacred confraternity of St. Francis, should be capable of being procuresses, or of promoting a meeting of lovers! These ladies of the holy fraternity are here look'd upon as persons already beatify'd. They maintain a great correspondence with certain friars, called Cordeliers, who direct them and are their associates. The Nazarenes call these holy unions by the name of Spiritual Kindred. From thence come all those phrases and forms of speech that we read in the mystic books, and which seem unintelligible; such are these: "I adore you from my heart, dear sister, as a Deity. You are always present to my mind, tho' I speak and act with other persons. — Pray for your brother, for your friend, for your servant *."

Some of these expressions are extracted from the books of one Francis de Sales, and from the letters he wrote to de Chantal, a nun. This Francis de Sales, was, tis affirmed, a civil sort of a man; who had as many crotchets in his head as Fontenelle. All the monks have been glad of this pretext for boldly writing the most passionate sentiments to their votaries, under the veil of a mystic language. The Spanish friars don't indeed use so much ceremony; they have a fair field open to them, and are welcome

* This last phrase is taken from father Girard's letters to la Cadiere.

to enter what houses they please. As under the shelter of their cowl they enjoy all manner of privileges; so they are more insolent, more ignorant, and more debauch'd, than in any other kingdom. If the children were to come into the world with any token that plainly pointed out their fathers, half of the Spaniards would find theirs among the clergy and friars.

The clergy in this country are not very regular in their manner of living, wherein they are very different from those of France; of whose regularity thou didst boast to me in thy letters. That thou may'st form a just idea, dear Monceca, of the ecclesiastics in this country, thou must take it for granted, that the monks are twice as wicked and ignorant as they are in France; and that the secular priests are not much better.

One thing which will surprize thee in a country where the inferior clergy are so depraved, is, the gravity, probity and candour of the Spanish pontiffs, who are really worthy of their rank; so that there's not one of them but deserves the esteem and approbation of all good men. Be the religion what it will, it cannot be denyed that a flock would be happy if they improved by the lessons of such sober pastors. The pontiffs are the only persons in Spain who are not subject to the inquisition. I will give thee an account hereafter of this iniquitous tribunal, of which I have already learnt many particulars that strike a horror. As soon as the terrible name of Inquisitor is mentioned in this country, every body trembles; and the greatest are as much afraid as the meanest subjects. Notwithstanding my passports, and the commission I bear with me from the republic of Genoa, I am forced to be very circumspect, and dare not, as when I was in France, speak what I think.

When I was got beyond Belle-garde, (the last place in France) I affected a silence very much resembling the Pythagorean. This melancholy air is agreeable enough in a country where every body is extremely reserved

reserv'd. They say that this gravity increaseth, the farther one advances into Spain; which if true, I expect, when I come to Madrid, to find a city full of Heraclitus's, and to see the inhabitants all in tears.

Now I speak of tears, I must tell thee, dear Monceca, that I laughed very heartily at a place to which I went to weep. In this city there's a company of players newly arriv'd; which I was assur'd is the best that has been seen in Spain for a long time. One especially was cry'd up, viz. la Galiega, who was the king's attrefs, but had left Madrid in some disgust. I was importun'd to go and see a new tragedy, which they assur'd me was a very fine and moving one. Guess how I was surpriz'd, dear Monceca, when entering into the theatre-room, I saw two comedians on the stage, in the habit of monks, playing the chief parts of a piece, intitled, *The Death of Alexis*; or, *The Example of chastity*. I must own to thee, this was such an absurdity as I did by no means expect. I wish'd at that very instant, that thou couldst have been eye witness of such a ridiculous thing. The subject of this tragedy was answerable to the character and dignity of the Dramatis Personæ. Alexis, the principal personage, is a Roman gentleman, very fond of celibacy; who having left his wife the very first night of the wedding, wander'd a long time from one town to another, till he came at last and died at the house of his father, who would not own him; but in compassion suffer'd him to retire to a sorry lonesome cottage, where he expir'd. A billet found in his hand when he is dead, discovers the whole mystery; but the paper can't be taken from him; for, dead as he is, he does not care to deliver it to any but the sovereign pontiff, who comes with his whole court to receive the saint's billet; and the play ends with a shout from the theatre.

Alexis, at the beginning of the first act, is but eighteen years old, and in the fifth he is from forty to forty-five. The rules of unity of place and action

action are as perfectly kept up as that of the twenty-four hours. The thoughts and sentiments were of a piece with all the rest; so that I don't think any composition can be more wild and ridiculous: Not but the Spaniards have several good dramatic pieces. Don Lopez de Vega has wrote very excellent comedies; but the people have very little relish for them. They had rather see St. Jago or St. Philip, than Agamemnon or Achilles; and the prints in the flesh of St. Francis extort more tears, than the complaints of Andromache, and the despair of Hermione. Such are the taste and prejudices of this country. Nothing will go down any-where but devotion, or rather superstition.

When the comedy was playing, I heard a bell tinkle; upon which all the company fell on their knees, and mutter'd something. The comedians led the way, and two authors that were upon the stage, interrupted one another; though they did but just stir their lips, and spoke as low as the other spectators. This ceremony being over, every body stood up again, and the play was continu'd. I ask'd what they meant by moving their lips, and was told, that this was call'd an Angelus. This is a sort of prayer which I could not have thought the Nazarenes would have made at the play-house. None but Spaniards could have chose such a place as that to say their prayers in. True it is that this place ought, in all appearance, to enjoy the same prerogatives as the monasteries; for they that take the money at the door are priests, who, under the denomination of being poor, share the profits with the comedians. Indeed, the companies of comedians, in consideration of this diminution of their revenue, enjoy all the privileges of the other Nazarenes. They are not excommunicated like those in France; and if they were rich enough, and devout enough, they might have a chaplain like the royal regiments.

When the comedians die in Spain, they are allow'd burial, which is deny'd them in France; whereas in England they have mausoleums erected to their honour

honour. From whence, dear Monceca, do such whimsies proceed, but from antient prejudices, much more than reason? which if it has any share in the interment of stage-players, I am sure it condemns the extravagance of the French, and that of the English too; and that it must approve of the just medium of the Spaniards. It would be well for the latter if they were as much guided by good-sense in all the actions of their lives.

Farewell dear Monceca; live content and happy; and may the God of our fathers crown thee with prosperity.

L E T T E R C I.

A description of Holland in general, and of Amsterdam in particular.—A very commendable character of the Dutch.—The prudence of their administration, politics, and toleration of all religions, commended.

AARON MONCECA to JACOB BRITO.

Amsterdam.—

I Am at length arriv'd in a country, dear Brito, where mankind is as free as they are slaves in the country which thou inhabitest: "Holland," says a French author, "seems to be the country of philosophers, who being free of that yoke which is impos'd upon reason elsewhere, may make use of it when they please." Good-sense seems to be intail'd upon the Dutch; and whoever examines them carefully, will readily own, that though nature has denied them the politeness of the English, and the vivacity of the Italians, she has amply rewarded them for the want of those qualities, by good-sense, candour, and a great forecast, which conducts them in all their actions.

The Dutch, being born free, only obey the laws of their country, and have no sovereigns but virtue and their duties. Thou must not fancy however that this character fits all the natives of Holland, for in

this country, as in all others, there are both good and bad, and the common-people in Holland are as despicable, as the burghers, and even the honest artificers, are commendable.

It would be impossible for me, dear Brito, to give thee a just idea of the manners of this country, without entring into particulars. Thou must be already sensible, that when I characterise the common-people, I don't inform thee of any thing that is peculiar to the burghers, and the chief men of the republic. The nobility that are still remaining in the country, have manners and customs that are very different also from those of the burghers. Therefore I shall endeavour to shew thee whatever I think worthy of remark in the several states of this republic.

Holland is an unpleasant country, it being land floating in the sea, and consisting of meadows, which, for three quarters of the year are laid under water: And were it is as fruitful in corn as it is barren, 'tis so narrow and close a country, that it could not feed one fifth part of its inhabitants.

All that the Dutch have to depend on, is their commerce, which they have spar'd no pains nor expence to advance in their own country, and to extend to the extreme parts of the world.

'Twas a meer necessity, and the oppression of the Spaniards, that forced the inhabitants of this country to go to the Indies, and form a second republic there. When they had shaken off the yoke of their former master, Spain was resolv'd to forbid them from trading to its ports, thinking by that means to weaken them, and to pave the way for their reduction. In process of time these difficulties made the Dutch resolve to go themselves to the very fountain of commerce. They sail'd to the Indies, and there they laid the fountain of those superb colonies which were afterwards form'd there. An Italian author, who cannot be reckon'd a very great friend of Holland, or much inclin'd to proclaim its grandeur, affirms, that

the city of Amsterdam alone had more shipping than all Europe put together *.

But it was not without difficulty that the Dutch establish'd their commerce in the East Indies; for the Portuguese, then the subjects of Spain, threaten'd them upon all occasions, and left no stone unturn'd to make them miscarry in their undertaking: But they surmounted all these difficulties; they conquer'd their enemies, and drove them from several of the islands of which they were the masters. These victories, and these happy beginnings, encourag'd their hopes, and they then began to think of extending their commerce to the West Indies.

The liberty which the Dutch enjoy, was of very great service to them in their undertakings. The intire security which foreigners meet with in their country, the asylum which has been granted there in all times since the establishment of the republic, to those that have been persecuted in other countries for the sake of their religion, have drawn such numbers of people to them, that they have been able to form powerful colonies, to fit out a prodigious number of ships, and at the same time to find their own country extremely populous.

If Spain had continued to be the mistress of Holland, Amsterdam would now perhaps have been like Antwerp. It would have been great only in extent, and remarkable only for its situation: Whereas now every thing in this stately city has the face of the ancient grandeur of the Tyrians and Phoenicians, of which the Greeks and Romans have left such pompous descriptions. Amongst the most remarkable things that I ever saw in all my travels, I never met with any thing that so much surpriz'd me as the port of Amsterdam. 'Tis impossible, without having seen it, to conceive what a grand appearance 2000 ships, inclos'd in that harbour, make. Were one to form an idea of a magnificent city built in the midst

* La quantita di vascelli, a commun giudicio, viene stimata sì grande, che pareggia quella che fa tutto il resto dell' Europa insieme. Bentivoglio,

of the waves, it would still come far short of that fine view of a number of ships from all the nations in the world, whose masts, flags and streamers, make such a shew that there's nothing like it to be seen.

Since I have been at Amsterdam, I have only had time as yet to make a general survey of the beauties of this city, without being able to examine them in particular; but I will take care to inform thee of every thing that I shall see, and endeavour to give thee an exact account of it.

There are few religions but what are profess'd in this city, where people have the liberty of worshipping the Divine Being after their own way. Yet the religion of the state, or that of the United Provinces, is the Christian reform'd religion, which thou knowest to be in the main the same as the Nazarene; and that it only differs from it in some few articles.

The Nazarene papists publicly damn the reformed Nazarenes, who indeed charitably allow their adversaries may have some little place in heaven; but they make it so hard a matter for them to attain to it, that, to speak frankly, they might as well give them to all the devils. These two different religions, or, to speak more properly, these two different opinions, because in the main they are both agreed as to the greatest part of facts, have caus'd a great many quarrels between their adherents. There was a time when the Nazarenes cut one another's throats, and thought to gain heaven by shedding one another's blood in defence of the opinions of a German monk*, and a French ecclesiastic†. These were two learned men, even by the confession of their enemies: I dare affirm also, that when they broach'd their opinions, they never thought that they would have been attended with such divisions; and if they were to come into the world now, I very much question whether there would be such war about their opinions now as then: Were they ever so good, people would be content to believe them, without offering to force them down one another's throats by the point of the sword. The

Naza-

* Luther.

† Calvin.

Nazarenes especially the reform'd, are wiser now than to commit massacres for arguments and syllogisms; and they grant free liberty of conscience to all that live in their country.

The reformed religion is indeed that which is the governing religion of Holland, but it does not tyrannize over the others; which however is a case that might easily happen were it not for the wisdom of the government. For 'tis here as elsewhere, and there are many zealous votaries among the reform'd, who, in imitation of the Jesuits, would, for the greater glory of God, torment a Nazarene papist with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. But the magistrates are so humane, and so far from being bigots, that they can't bear the mention of such oppressions as would in the consequence be prejudicial to the state. Therefore the Nazarene papists have so much reason to commend the lenity of the government, that we are assur'd that the number of the papists who are settled in this country surpasses, or at least equals that of the reformed.

The just limits which the wisdom of the Dutch has put to the ambition of the clergy, are a farther security to the tranquility of all the religions that are different and separate from that which is uppermost; for it would be not only in vain, but dangerous, for them to endeavour to foment a pious zeal in their folks against such as they call heretics or non-conformists. If they should cause the least disturbance they would be injoin'd to pray to God; and upon their disobedience, their pockets would pay for it: For as they have no revenue but what is granted them by the state, the moment they fail in their duty to the state, it withdraws its allowance, and leaves the said clergy, with their wives and children, to shift for themselves.

In the reformed religion the clergy are marry'd. They thought good-sense dictated that they should be allow'd to have wives, for fear they should use the privilege of the Nazarene monks, and make use of their neighbours wives. It must be confess'd therefore, that their manners in general are worthy of

the purity of the golden age. I should not be surpriz'd if I heard that a minister (by which name the reformed call their priests) had been guilty of a failing of that sort; for they are but men, and, as such, liable to human passions; but hitherto none has been reproach'd with the least crime that is shocking to decency.

The author of Calvinism did, I think, very considerable prejudice to the clergy that adhered to his sentiments: He permitted them to take wives, but clipp'd their benefices, which may be call'd burning the candle at both ends.

The Calvinists Dutch have no such thing as sovereign pontiffs, or ordinary pontiffs, all their priests being upon an equal footing. They never had the tempting pleasure of hearing themselves saluted by the titles of my Lord, your Grace, or your Eminence; nor do they fail to give the name of the whore of Babylon to all the churches where any of the clergy are vested with pompous titles, and enjoy a revenue of 40,000 livres; though perhaps they condemn what they would be glad of in their hearts: And the article in which they would the soonest shake hands with their adversaries, would undoubtedly be that which should permit them to possess great benefices, and to be honour'd with the titles of Lordship or Eminence, as well as the Nazarene pontiffs.

If the ministers are not rich, they are however learned: They are not admitted till they have been maturely examin'd; whereas, in almost all the orders, the Nazarene monks are for the most part, beggars and drones. The clergy among the reformed are advanc'd to that station by their merit and learning; so that the meanest pastor is not only instructed in his religion, but sometimes knows those things that form great men, of whom the body of ministers have furnish'd many. They mortally hate the Jesuits, and the latter hate them as bad, for which I think that both have reason. Were it not for the ministers, all Europe would be all papists; were it not for the Jesuits, it would be all reform'd. Though they are
so

exasperated one against another, yet I make no doubt but from the bottom of their hearts, they do one another justice, and that they own their adversaries have both learning and merit ; at least, the famous Claude, and the celebrated Arnauld, thought after this manner. I have however met with Jansenists in France, who assured me very confidently, that the Jesuits were ignoramus's; and such was their animosity and blindness, that they would hardly allow them to understand politics, though it must be confess'd, that they are a learned body, and that this order has produced great men. The Benedictines, of whom there have been many scholars of the first rank, love the Jesuits but little better than the reformed do ; yet they own that their adversaries have had authors worthy of the esteem of the universe, were they only to name the Sirmondus's and Petavius's.

In this dispute between the Nazarene doctors, Papists, Jansenists, Reform'd, &c. 'tis my opinion that a man of sense ought only to regard what is good in their writings, without troubling himself what an author's opinion was about grace or predestination, if there were any excellencies in other parts of his works. What is it to me, dear Brito, when I am reading Daniel's History of France, whether that writer was a Jesuit or a Rabbi ? Provided I can reap any benefit by his work, I am ready to give it the praise which it deserves, and at the same time to blame a bad historian, tho' he were a Jew. The learned, as to the correspondence of civil life, are of all sorts of religions. 'Tis the last degree of folly not to do justice to the merit of a man, because he worships the Deity in a manner different from ours. A weakness so extravagant as this, is what none but the monks and prelates of Italy can be guilty of.

There is no country where people, tho' of a different religion, live in more union than in Holland : Here Jews, Nazarenes, and Mahometans, treat one another as if they were brethren. They all look upon themselves as but men, and as children of the
same

same God. Happy country! where men have a tenderness for their fellow creatures, and don't demand that they should be slaves to an opinion, which often they can neither believe, nor comprehend!

Farewell dear Brito; live content and happy; and let me have the pleasure of hearing from thee. I am commanded by Moses Rodrigo to make his compliments to thee. He proves of very great service to me in this country.

L E T T E R CII.

Reflections on the ridiculous pride, sloth, and ignorance of the Spaniards.—The inns in Spain, wretched places of accommodation.—An insurrection of the shoemakers, in the time of Charles II.—The power of the monks exemplified in the story of a viceroy of Valencia, who was ruined, and obliged to quit the country for condemning a monk to be lianged that had headed a gang of murderers and robbers.

JACOB BRITO to AARON MONCECA.

Madrid.—

I Can't express to thee, dear Monceca, how much I am struck with the manners and customs of the Spaniards, which I think every day more and more extraordinary; and for the two months that I have now been in Spain, have had more cause to make reflections upon the pride and ignorance of mankind, than I had for a whole year that I stay'd in Italy.

There's hardly a road in this country more frequented than that from Barcelona to Madrid; yet in several parts of it a traveller finds nothing that he wants. Instead of inns after the French or Italian manner, he meets with nothing but sorry Venta's*, which are great houses ready to tumble down, with some bedsteads up in the garrets. The weary travel-

* Paultry inns.

ler, when he comes to these delicious quarters, finds nothing at all to eat; but must send to the baker for bread, and to the butcher for meat; and if he has no servant, he is obliged to go out himself for his provision. The landlord of the Venta's would not go out of his way for a prince, and would think it a dishonour to him, if he took one step more than his rank obliged him.

Indeed, in towns of any note there are none of these venta's; but the cabarets or houses of entertainment there are so detestable, the accommodations and the attendance so bad, that they are little better than those charming venta's.

Nothing but mere necessity can engage a man to travel in Spain; for he must be a madman if he did it out of pure curiosity, unless he does it for the sake of picking up memoirs to furnish a history of the depravity of the human understanding: In this case he could not do better, because wherever he sets his foot, he would be sure to find pride, poverty, low cunning, ignorance and bigotry, superstition, vanity and ridiculous ceremony, which form the character of the Spanish nation; and tho' many people give out in foreign countries, that the modern Spaniards are not like what they were heretofore, they confound the foreigners that are settled in Spain with the original natives of the country. 'Tis true, that in the present reign, the court has assumed a new face, and that the grandees, who are every where the slaves to ambition, have found their way to court, by adopting maxims very different from those by which they were governed formerly. But the populace, the burghers, and the common sort of gentry, are still those very Spaniards, whose rhodomantades have often made all Europe merry; and whose poverty and nastiness sometimes outstrip their vanity.

Thou canst not imagine, dear Monceca, how very haughty the common-people are here; and upon holidays thou wouldst be amazed to see a company of who often for want of bread have fasted all the week long, strutting in black silk, with a sword by their
their

their sides, and accosting one another with very honourable titles. When a peasant meets another in the fields, he salutes him gravely, and says to him emphatically, Adio, Seignor Cavallero; i. e. Farewell, Sir Gentleman:" To which polite compliment the other makes answer with very great seriousness; and there's as much majesty at their greetings, as if it was at the interview of two potent monarchs, on the frontiers of their respective dominions.

Heretofore the common people were not only proud, but even insolent to their grandees, and their sovereign; but under this monarch, affairs look with another face. He has so humbled the people, that he is in no fear of their commotions. In the reign of his predecessor Charles II. the shoemakers of Madrid were so considerable a body, that whenever they mutiny'd, the court was obliged to grant their demands. Being informed, in 1676, that the court had regulated the price of shoes, it so disgusted them that they presented a petition to the president of the council of Castile, wherein they demanded that the price might be settled as it was before; and finding that he was not so quick as they would have him in compliance, they all ran with their lasts and stirrups under the windows of Charles's chamber, and cry'd out with all their might; "Viva el Rei, y muera el mal gouvierno! i. e. God bless the king, but may the wicked governor perish!" The king, surpris'd at such extraordinary unexpected music, went to the windows, and was not a little astonish'd to see the worshipful company of the shoemakers of Madrid; upon which he sent for the president of Castile, who, to put a stop to so disagreeable a concert, gave the mutineers leave to sell their shoes as dear, and to make them of as bad leather as they pleased.

The thing which encouraged these shoemakers to be so bold, was the indulgence which had been shewn some days before to the masons that met in one of the out-parts of the city, and resolv'd to enter by force of arms into the houses of some of the magistrates, who did not govern to their minds, and whom

whom they accused of confounding affairs, and of laying schemes for starving the poor. The design of these new reformers was to cut the throats of those pretended criminals, in the face of all the world, to make examples of them. By good luck, there was not a mutineer that had resolution enough to put himself at the head of the conspirators; and the affair had no consequence, every one returning home to his work, and the magistrates continued to plunder. The insurrection of the shoemakers was owing to the folly of not punishing the former rebels. 'Tis true, that in the last reign the bad administration was the cause of frequent rebellions. The duke of Medina-Cœli, who had the management of affairs, was of a very indolent temper; so that every one robb'd and plundered, and there never was a penny to be found in the king's coffers.

The poverty of the common-people was partly owing to their laziness, and indeed to the idleness of most of the burghers; and 'tis this same sluggishness that even contributes at this day to the exportation of a great quantity of money out of Spain; and what riches soever the flota brings into it every year, it is not sufficient to remedy the mischief which the government suffers from the sloth, and ridiculous vanity, of a part of the subjects. Moreover, out of the extraordinary sums that are brought from the Indies, near two thirds must be deducted, which foreigners draw back for the goods by them furnished.

The chief reason why the Spaniards have so little money of their own, is the prodigious number of French and Flemings that come hither to serve them, who do things which the don Diego's, the don Sancho's and the don Rodrigo's would scorn to put their hands to, and which would be such a wound to their vanity, that they would rather by a thousand times chuse to be starved with hunger, than resolve to undertake. The Flemings and the French, who are not so lazy and so vain as the Spaniards, are employed in their tillage, in their buildings, and in the most servile drudgery; and when they have scraped a few pistoles
toget-

together, they take leave of the don Sancho's and the don Diego's, and carry the cash home into their own country, leaving their masters without a penny, but with the same pride and haughtiness as ever. The number of these foreigners that come to work in Spain, is so considerable, that a French author says, there are no less than 80000 of them, that are continually coming into and going out of the kingdom in this manner; and that there is not a man but carries away every year seven or eight pistoles, and sometimes more. 'Tis very plain, dear Monceca, that this must amount to a prodigious sum. 'Tis true that since Philip the Fifth came to the throne, the great numbers of French that have settled in Spain, have contributed prodigiously to repeople it, and have very much diminished the circulation of the travelling domestics and peasants, by furnishing the don Garcia's and don Pedro's with fixed servants.

One reason of the little care taken in Spain to cultivate the lands, which are for the most part fallow, or very much neglected, is the great number of monks with which this country abounds more than any other. Here it may be said they are in their garrison. The priests for many years have had the prerogative, in this country, of ruining and tormenting to death all that dare to disoblige them, on pretence that they are Jews, conjurers, blasphemers, or that they have been guilty of some other crimes, cognizable by the tribunal of the inquisition. Whoever is so presumptuous as to scruple to bend the knee before the monkish idol, is delivered over to the hands of the hangman. But I don't design to acquaint thee with the cruelties of the inquisition at this time, and shall relate all the horrors that I have heard of it in another letter. One thing which surprises me is, that the Spaniards, if they had not this barbarous inquisition, would be every whit as submissive to the monks, for whom they have a ridiculous veneration, which seems to be an idea born with them; and they promote them to all the eminent posts: 'Tis true, that the present ministry is so wise and clear-sighted as to op-

pose

pose this custom very much ; but the evil is so rooted that it is incurable.

The duke of Medina-Cœli, who was prime minister to Charles the Second, met with no affair in all his administration that gave him more trouble to manage than that of changing the king's confessor : For no sooner had the duke promoted one to that post, but he was obliged to remove him ; so that in five years, that monarch had no less than seven confessors, of whom there was not one who did not cabal, and confound affairs.

The veneration the Spaniards have for the friars is so great, so blind, that it makes them undertake the vindication of the most unparalleled misdemeanors ; they even punish those that offer to stop them, by striking at the monastic privileges ; and the most exalted station never proved a shelter to those that have dared to attempt it.

A monk of the kingdom of Valencia, which is a country that abounds with robbers, murderers and assassins, after having quitted his convent, put himself at the head of those banditti, who are called *Bandelero's*, and distinguished himself by several wicked actions ; but just as he had committed an assassination, he was taken with the weapons upon him. All the divinity of the school could not furnish him with arguments to palliate his crime. Some person of good-sense, who thought that it was absolutely necessary to make an example of him, advised the viceroy to hang up the friar upon the spot ; which he had a great mind to do, but being afraid of the monastic posse, he called a council of four friars of the several orders, and commanded them to give him their opinion. There were two of them who quoted all the Spanish doctors, and pretended that the friar could not be tried till the pontiff was acquainted of his affair. The two other friars, forgetting as it were by a miracle, the venerable habit of St. Francis, with which they were cloathed, and struck with horror at the murder which their brother had committed, voted that he should be executed with all pos-

fible speed. In this conflict of opinions, the viceroy thinking that it was for the king's service to make a speedy and severe example of him, adhered to that opinion which he thought most conformable to justice, and caused the criminal to be executed on the spot.

The clergy being informed that a monk was going to be punished, who deserv'd to be broke upon the wheel, met in a tumultuous manner, and made haste to the pontiff, who entering into their opinion, sent to desire the viceroy to proceed no farther. But the latter thought himself excused for this time from paying his filial obedience; and going roundly to work, the monk was executed without a moment's delay. But it was scarce over, when the pontiff published an interdict, at which melancholy news the people thought themselves undone, took arms in a rage, and besieged the viceroy, who was fled to his palace for refuge. They said to him: "Unhappy governor! wouldst thou have us become as black as coal, and as dry as wood? Dost thou think that we have a mind to be excommunicated for thy sake? Thou must be either a Jew or a Moor to have presumed to commit a crime that subjects thee to the wrath of Heaven." The Viceroy did not think fit to reason with the populace that had such strong arguments on their side, but was so wise as to make his escape out of the town. The court, being informed of this affair, appointed a Jesuit and a Dominican to enquire into it. Thou already perceivest, dear Monceca, that the viceroy had not justice done him; for he was severely chastised for having dared to punish a villain: He was banish'd twenty leagues from Madrid, and another was appointed to enjoy his place.

Farewell, dear Monceca; live content and happy.

LETTER

L E T T E R CIII.

The republic of Holland, highly commended.—An amiable character of the people, and their government.—An account of the different sects of religion practised there.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Amsterdam.—

THE air of Holland seems to inspire a love of philosophy; that liberty which is enjoyed there furnishes the mind with a thousand ideas which don't present themselves to it elsewhere. Every man in this country has a right of thinking, reasoning, and explaining himself, without running the risque of his life or fortune. Every body may serve God in their own way; and provided they are virtuous, they are sure of being quiet in this country.

The freedom of religion which people enjoy in these provinces, does not give occasion to the least trouble. As there is not one that has a thought of tyrannizing over the others, all mankind live in peace here, and every one follows his own opinion. For be the diversity of sentiments among the Dutch ever so great, they all centre in this point; "Let us not force others, and let us not be forced."

These happy people are truly humane, and attach'd to the first principles of the law of nature. They don't think that the difference of opinions ought to be an occasion of violence and persecution. They leave it to God to enlighten the mind. They don't make human nature blush under the specious colour of truth and religion; and the fondness for extending their faith does not make them put the less value upon the lives of their brethren. Is a man the less so, for being a Persian or an Indian? If he is virtuous, why must he be banished from society? A Turk, or if you will, a Bonze, if he be a man of candour, is every where an inestimable treasure; and he ought to be respected by his fellow-creatures at Amsterdam, as well as at Constantinople, or at Pekin.

These maxims are so perfectly rivetted in the Dutch, that there are few people persecuted for religion, but are sure of finding not only a shelter among them, but real protection. One would imagine, that the uniformity of their faith had excited their charity towards the French refugees. I am apt to think it has a share in it. But the hatred which they bear to violence was the single motive that determined them to assist the Portuguese Jews against the persecution of their tyrants. The United Provinces have received our unfortunate proscribed brethren, and protected them from the rage of the monks. There are numbers of Nazarene papists that ought eternally to own their obligations to the goodness of the Dutch, whose tender compassion has been experienced too by many celebrated authors of the first rank, who have had the misfortune to be banished their country.

'Tis not here as in many countries, where our unfortunate nation seems only tolerated to be a prey to all the injuries, and to suffer all the severities of fortune. A Jew at Amsterdam is a subject who enjoys all the privileges to which the other religions are intitled; and the cousin of a Roman pontiff, the brother of the first Lutheran baron, and the son of an English bishop, have not greater prerogatives in Holland than the child of the meanest rabbi. If a man has the happiness to be born a subject of the republic, he enjoys all privileges, he owes submission to nobody, and owns not even the magistrate, but when he is in his office; for at the other times they are all upon a level.

It may therefore, dear Isaac, be justly said, that the Jews are free in Holland and in England, but slaves every where else, either to the Nazarenes or to Mussulmen. We are tolerated at Rome, and indeed have many synagogues there; but what constraint are we not put under! what cruelty, scorn and labour, are we not subject to, to purchase the asylum which is granted us! I have been assured by several of our brethren, that by an ordinance of a certain pontiff
of

of Rome *, a particular number of Jews there were obliged to be present every Saturday in the afternoon at a Nazarene sermon, when a company of friars walk'd about the church with long wands in their hands; and if a Jew seem'd not to give good attention, he was reprimanded, and treated like a scholar sent to learn his catechism; for the least mark of heedlessness was corrected by two or three raps over the shoulders. Sometimes the monks peep into the ears of such as are present at these sermons, for fear they should stop them with cotton.

For what purpose is all this grimace, or rather, these indignities? Are the Nazarenes so senseless as to think that the mind is convinced by vain declamations? The heart can never be brought to relish reason without finding out some method to pre-engage it. Though it were true, as it is not, that the Nazarenes are in the right way, the harsh, violent and tyrannical manner, with which they declare their sentiments to us, would hinder us from embracing them, and prejudice us against a religion which aims at sovereign power, and seeks to convince by force rather than by reason.

The Dutch, my dear Isaac, are very far from opening the ears of their preachers with switches. Being content to follow those opinions which they think the most probable, they trouble themselves as little with their neighbours faith as with their domestic affairs, into which they never inquire.

A man in this country is a despotic king at his own house, where he gives orders like a sovereign. He is not afraid who inquires or knows what he does; unless only, in case it be suspected that he acts against the government, or the welfare of society.

From that liberty which all the Dutch enjoy to a man, arises their love of the country, which every individual looks upon as a kind mother, of whose privileges he ought to be tender. These sentiments are so impress'd on their minds that nothing can efface

* Gregory XIII.

them; and as there are few, if any, monks in Holland, and as they have no authority there, the tranquillity of the republic is like to last for ever. The difference of religion is not a thing to be feared in it. The Dutch are people of too good sense ever to disturb the republic for the sake of defending the opinion of any doctors. They permit them to write as many books as they will, and when they are good, either for instruction or amusement, they read them; but if they are trifling, they let them rot in peace with the bookiellers.

The consequence of the liberty which the learned men enjoy of disputing as they please, is a number of different creeds or religions, which are in the main all Nazarene, tho' they vary in certain points. Perhaps, dear Monceca, thou wilt not be sorry if I give thee a short history of some of these differing sects.

One of the most considerable is that of the Armenians, which took its name from Arminius, Divinity-Professor at Leyden. It only differs from the religion of the Reformed or Calvinists, in the articles of grace and predestination.

The Anti-Trinitarians or modern Arians have revived the opinions of that famous Arius, who made such a noise among the Nazarene pontiffs in the time of Constantine. His sentiments after 200 years of triumph, and 1300 of oblivion, are revived at this day, and have been maintained in our time by very able men, especially in England. Dr. Clarke, a learned Englishman, wrote several tracts to prove the validity and truth of this doctrine; and the celebrated Newton is supposed to have dy'd an Arian. If I was a Nazarene, I should be at a loss to comprehend how it was possible that this truth should not be known to any body for above thirteen centuries.

One of the most extraordinary sects is that of the Quakers, which has neither priests, nor worship. They who are of this opinion are not baptised like the Nazarenes, nor circumcized like the Jews and the Turks. All the religious ceremony they have
when

when they meet is to hear a person preach a sermon ; but the preacher starts up by chance. The first that has a notion of being inspired, be it man or woman, declares what he or she thinks the spirit dictates, and the audience is very attentive. The women are very careful to hide their faces with their fans, and the men are covered with broad-brim'd hats, which give them an air extremely serious and gloomy. The Quakers are, perhaps, the only true philosophers of all the Nazarenes. They never give any body the title of Sir, much less of Your Highness, or Your Majesty. They say that all such words are the invention of the pride of man : and that tis ridiculous to call mere earthworms by the title of Your Eminence, Your Holiness, Your Excellency, &c. And to avoid being guilty of it, they Thee and Thou even princes and kings. All the reason they give for it is, that a great man is not two persons ; and that Thou becomes him much better than You, which is generally larded with some superb terms that he does not deserve. Their habit is generally very plain, without plaits or buttons, to the end that it may be a continual lesson to them to be more virtuous than other men whose unprofitable and criminal dress they have rejected. They never take oaths ; for they say tis horrid to prostitute the name of the Most High in the disputes of wretched mortals ; and that a man who has a mind to be virtuous, ought never to affirm or deny a thing but by a Yea and a Nay.

I will confess to thee, dear Isaac, that I can never say enough in praise of this custom of the Quakers ; for oaths are vain and superfluous, and serve to no purpose. With men the knave is not afraid to take a false oath, and the gentleman ought to be believed upon his word. Perhaps thou hast not seen that fine passage of a tragic author of this century :

——— Laisse-la sermens,

S'ils faisoient dans les cœurs naître les sentimens,
Je t'en demanderois. Mais quelle est leur puissance ?

Le

Le vice les trahit, la vertu s'en offense,
 Il suffit, entre nous, de ton devoir, du mien.
 Voila le vrai serment : Les autres ne font rien *.

i. e.

————— Let's hear no more of oaths.
 If they awaken'd conscience in the breast,
 I would demand them of thee. But what do they
 avail?

Vice betrays them, virtue frowns at them.
 For us, let it suffice to discharge our respective ob-
 ligations.
 That's the true oath ; others are good for nought.

The last virtue of the Quakers is never to go to war, and not to shed blood upon any pretext whatever. They say, that the glory of conquerors is a fury fit for a madman. They are griev'd at the murders which other men commit, and gild over with the epithets of Courage, Greatness of Soul, Magnanimity, or Love of their Country. They add, that if all men were Quakers, content with possessing what they have, and careful to make the unfortunate share with them, they would not, like famish'd wolves, go and tear people to pieces, whom they never saw, or had any knowledge of ; and, who never perhaps did them any harm.

The sect of Anabaptists, or rather Mennonites, so call'd from a Frieseland priest named Menno, is much the same with that of the Quakers, excepting the shaking which the latter affect when they receive the pretended inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and excepting Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which the Mennonites administer to adult persons, and which the Quakers make no use of.

The Rhinsbourgians, so called from the village of Rhinsbourg near Leyden, where they meet every year, the day after Pentecost, are descended from the

* Houdart de la Motte, in the Tragedy of Romulus, Act V. Scene I.

Arminians ; but they have adopted several opinions of the Arians, Quakers, Anabaptists, &c. and their religion is a medley of the opinions of all the Nazarene sects.

The Hebraists are a sort of Nazarene Jews, who deem the perfect knowledge of the Hebrew language as an article of faith. In this sect there's a great number of women : And God knows what a concert is formed by the clacks of these Hebraists going all together ! They have an air of tumult and wildness which scarce inspires devotion.

In all these different religions, dear Isaac, there are a few honest souls full of probity and candour, who believe that the most agreeable worship to the Divine Being is to serve him with zeal and fervency. Thinkest thou that they will ever be plunged in darkness, because they are not born of the race of Jacob ? Will it be of no service to them to have followed the law of nature, which was the first that men practised, and the lights of their own consciences ? When they have acknowledged but one God, and done nothing but good to their neighbour in this world, shall they be everlastingly unhappy in the other ? And because they did not believe it was necessary for salvation to be a Jew, can the Divinity resolve to punish creatures for being virtuous ? This however, is said by our rabbies, who affirm, that tis a mystery which passeth our knowledge. But must we absolutely believe them ?

Farewell, dear Isaac ; live content ; and though tis thy happiness to be born a Jew, don't rashly condemn others.

LETTER CIV.

The power of early prejudices in matters religion treated of.—The difficulty of divesting the mind of the first principles imbibed by it, demonstrated.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS.

Amsterdam.—

THE variety of sects one observes in Holland, has led me into serious reflections upon the power of prejudices. I have attentively consider'd how difficult it is for men to know the errors of the religion in which they are bred, how visible soever they are to such as are born in another opinion.

The notion which people conceive in their youth of what they call grounds of faith, is so strong and has so much the ascendant over them, that they easily swallow sentiments directly opposite to one another, and equally ridiculous, without perceiving their astonishing contrariety. "The objects," says Cicero, "which are daily present to our view, become so familiar to our minds, that they neither admire them, nor are solicitous to know the causes of them†." Men observe the same conduct in what concerns their religion. They are accusom'd from their tender years to entertain such and such opinions; and as extraordinary as they must appear to them when they have attained to a certain age, it does not at all strike them. They have contracted such a familiarity with them, and the custom of regarding them as fundamentals, has taken such deep root in them, that it leads them to an implicit belief of things that are opposite to natural reason, or common sense; and if by chance there be any doubt in their minds, so far are they from endeavouring to clear it up, that they themselves would contribute to their prejudices, and study for reasons to fortify them.

† *Consuetudine oculorum assuescunt animi; neque admirantur, neque requirunt rationes earum rerum quas semper vident.* Cicero de Natura Deorum, lib. ii. cap. 38.

The thing that perpetuates errors in the generality of mankind, is a firm belief they have in certain false opinions, which they look upon as principles so certain that they won't give themselves the trouble to examine them. They would think themselves criminal, if they did but doubt of them for a single moment. Now 'tis certain, that most of the opinions which flow from those false principles, must unavoidably be tainted with the vicious quality of their source. A fanatic who takes it for an evident principle that he or his teacher is immediately inspir'd of God; easily admits all the chimera's of his disorder'd brain, and heated imagination, as revelations from God. He even draws conclusions which seem just. "I am inspir'd!" says he. "The spirit which inspires me, being God himself, cannot deceive me. Ergo, every thing with which I am inspir'd is true." 'Tis in vain to go to shew him the ridicule of the things with which he pretends to have been inspir'd. He always recurs to his argument; and if one offers to attack the principle which he goes upon, he immediately drops the dispute, and looks upon the person who denies the reality of his inspiration, as a man that would not care to own that two and two make four, and that would refuse his assent to the clearest evidence.

The generality of mankind being so prejudic'd in favour of the mistaken principles they have once imbib'd, as to be incapable of being mov'd by probabilities not only the most apparent, but the most convincing, in matters that are contradictory to those principles; we are not to wonder, dear Isaac, at the obstinacy which we perceive in the sticklers of the several sects. There are few persons of so superior a genius as to be able to conquer the impressions of their youth, which gather strength by time, and that are willing to carry the flambeau of truth in the midst of a multitude of errors which they have been accustomed to look upon as sacred. Religions the most absurd have been adher'd to by the greatest men. Can the wit of man shew any thing so extravagant

as idolatry? Yet how many genius's of the first class have been plung'd in the horror and folly of Paganism! If they had only reflected for one moment upon the first principles of their faith, they would quickly have perceiv'd the ridicule of it; but being accustom'd from their tender years to look upon them as truths generally receiv'd, they were not at all shock'd by the absurdities which naturally flow'd from them.

I know, my dear Isaac, that there are at this day many learned men who maintain, that of all the great men of antiquity, none believ'd a plurality of Gods. But how can they bring mere conjectures for proofs, against the testimonies that subsist in the writings that are still extant, and which so clearly demonstrate what was the opinion of their authors? Cicero, who is commonly quoted for one of the Pagan philosophers that was most firmly persuaded of the existence of the Divine Being, makes use of the argument of innate ideas, and of that of the general consent of mankind, to prove that there are several Gods. "Since there is no law nor custom, says he, that manifests to mankind the existence of the Gods, this idea must be, as it were innate with them. Nay, it cannot be but the existence of those Gods must be real; because 'tis unavoidable for a thing not to be true when 'tis received by the general consent of all mankind *."

Dost think, dear Isaac, that a man who argues after this manner, believes there is but one God? How can it be; since the very argument that he makes use to prove the being of several Gods, is contrary to the hypothesis of one God only? For if the consent which all people give to a thing was

* Cum enim non institutio aliquo, aut more, aut lege, sit opinio constituta, maneatque ad unum omnium firma consensus, intelligi necesse est esse Deos, quoniam infinitas eorum, vel potius innatas cogitationes habemus. De quo autem omnium natura consensit, id verum esse necesse est. Esse igitur Deos confitendum est. Cicero de natura Deorum, lib. i. p. 68.

really a mark of its truth, it would follow that there was at one time a great number of Gods, because all the nations of the earth were plung'd for several ages successively in idolatry; and because none acknowledg'd the true God but the Israelites, who, in comparison to the whole world, were but a pin's point.

'Tis idle therefore to pretend to argue, that it was impossible for people that had a genius and learning, to be so blind as to believe the Pagan religion: For if one does but consider what submission men pay to the first prejudices which they imbibe in their infancy, and how much they are govern'd by certain opinions which they look upon as sure maxims, we shall no longer wonder that they admit all the absurd consequences that flow from them. 'Tis true that some of the philosophers rejected the ridiculous consequences that attend the notion of Polytheism, for they were aware, that it was impossible for such extravagancies to be in the least consistent with the Divine Nature. But it seems however, that they were influenc'd by the power of prejudices; and that, tho' they rejected the consequences of those principles, they had however a blind difference for them which they could not shake off. "The additions, say Aristotle, that have been made to the Divine Nature, are only fables accommodated to mens capacity. We know that there are Gods, and that their essence is divine. Whatever they say more of them is fiction, invented for the sake of society. 'Tis from this principle that the Gods are liken'd not only to men, but animals*."

* Tradita autem sunt quædam a majoribus nostris, et admodum antiquis, ac in fabulæ figura posterioribus relicta, quod hi Dii sint, universamque naturam divinam contineant. Cætera vero fabulose ad multitudinis persuasionem, et ad legum, ac ejus quod conferat opportunitatem, jam illata sunt. Homini formis namque, ac aliorum animalium nonnullis, similes eos dicunt, ac alia consequentia, similia iis quæ dicta sunt. Aristot. Metaphys. lib. xii. cap. viii. p. 744.

Consider, dear Isaac, that Aristotle, while he condemns the chimera's that are vented concerning the Gods, lays down the plurality of those same Gods as an acknowledg'd truth, and as an undeniable principle. As absurd and as impious as this belief was, it was so generally receiv'd by the Greeks of the highest dignity, that it cost Socrates his life for presuming to maintain the unity of the Godhead; and, no doubt, it was the fear of shocking the doctrine of Polytheism, which induc'd Epicurus to allow that existence to a plurality of Gods, which he and his disciples refus'd them in their hearts. As ridiculous soever as it was to admit of Gods, and to deprive them of all power, yet it was far from exasperating such people as would have look'd upon it to be no less than an attempt to strike at their first principles.

We must therefore attribute the duration of religions, and the obstinacy of those who profess them, to the profound veneration which all mankind have for the first sentiments with which they are inspir'd in their youth. That's the reason why they are for maintaining the errors which they follow and defend from the relation they bear to other errors to which they give the name of principles. Consequently, no wonder if we find great men, in all the various religions, solicitous to demonstrate the truth of them strenuously convinc'd of that in which they live, and openly condemning all others that are opposite to it. A Quaker may argue perfectly just in every thing which does not relate to Quakerism; for, since in things that are foreign to his religion, he examines the principles which he is willing to build on, he is no more liable to err than another man.

It would be wrong to object that 'tis impossible for a man who makes use of his reason, in the common course of things, to be so prejudic'd as to swallow the absurdities of some of the modern religions; and that if they who profess them have any genius, they must have but a mean opinion of them. In order to be convinc'd that there is no religion, how
absurd

absurd to ever, but it may be believ'd, we need only examine the ridiculous parts of the Pagan; and since it will appear, that great men have believ'd a plurality of Gods, a Jew, be he ever so zealous, will not be surpriz'd that Newton was an Arian †, Arnaud and Pascal, Papists, Limbourg an Arminian; Claude a Calvinist, Barclay a Quaker, and Galen an Anabaptist. All those learned men believ'd nothing so absurd, and so contrary to the light of nature, or common-sense, as the plurality of Gods. The force of prejudice, and the veneration that men have for opinions which they look upon as first principles, must needs have a despotic power over their minds, in that it does not permit them to acknowledge their blindness. Nobody has better describ'd the folly and extravagance of Paganism, than one of the antient Nazarene doctors, call'd Arnobius. He shews, in a method as evident as eloquent, the confusion that must be the consequence of the equality of the offerings made to the Gods, by two nations that are enemies to each other. "In that case it would be unavoidable, says he, for the Gods to know what party to espouse; and they must either continue neuter, and so be ungrateful to both the parties, or else must pull down with one hand what they set up with the other †." This is what they say happen'd at the siege of Troy, when the Gods, not being able to agree among themselves, and to determine whom to favour, espous'd, after a division, the quarrel of the Greeks and Trojans. Venus, she who was

† See Voltaire's VIIth letter concerning the English.

‡ Quod si populi duo hostilibus dissidentes armis, sacrificiis paribus superiorum locupletaverint aras, alterque in alterum postulent vires sibi que ad auxilium commendari, nonne iterum necesse est credi, si præmiis sollicitantur ut profint, eos partes inter utrasque debere hæsitare, desigi, nec reperire quid faciant, cum suas intelligant gratias sacrorum acceptionibus obligatas? Aut enim auxilia hinc et inde præstabunt, id quod fieri non potest; pugnabunt enim contra ipsos seipsi, contra suas gratias voluntatesque ninentur; aut ambobus populis opem subministrare cessabunt; id quod sceleris magni est, post impensam acceptamque mercedem. Arnob. lib. vii. p. 219, &c.

form'd to govern the pleasures and the graces in Paphos and Cytherea, was wounded for rashly interposing in the midst of the combat. However that was not one of the most dishonest employments of this Goddess; for she had others which would have put a woman of the least modesty to the blush. And therefore one of the antient Nazarene pontiffs reproaches the Pagan philosophers, "that in order to train up their youth well, they were oblig'd to set before them not the example of the deities that they ador'd, but that of wise and virtuous men*.

Since persons of such wisdom and learning, and those whose works of so many ages standing are still the admiration of the learned, since such as they believ'd the existence of a number of Gods, and Gods so imperfect, thou wilt frankly own, dear Isaac that there are few mortals so happy as intirely to conquer all prejudices; and that its no wonder if we find men of a superior genius believing in the most absurd religions.

Let us therefore be thankful to God that we were born in that of Moses; and let us apply ourselves in good earnest duly to discharge all the duties of it.

Farewell, dear Isaac; and don't neglect any longer to let me hear from thee.

* Nihil homines tam infociabiles reddit vitæ perversitate, quam illorum deorum imitatio, quales describuntur et commendantur literis eorum. Denique illi doctissimi viri, qui rem publicam, civitatemque terrenam, qualis eis esse debere videbatur, magis domesticis disputationibus requirebant, vel etiam describebant, quam publicis actionibus instituebant atque formabant, egregios atque laudabiles, quos putabant, homines potius, quam Deos suos, imitandos proponebant erudiendæ indoli juventutis. Augustini Epist. CCII. p. 864.

LETTER CV.

The author divides, the Dutch people into four classes, viz. The Common people; the Merchants and Burghers; the Patricians or Magistrates; and the Nobility; and gives the particular characteristic of each class.

AARON MONCECA to ISAAC ONIS

Amsterdam, —

HAVING endeavour'd to give thee an idea of the Dutch in general, I now propose to acquaint thee of what I have observ'd in particular. The populace in this country, as I told thee in my former letters, are brutish, and often insolent. " 'Tis a hard matter, says a modern author, to reform them. Laws may be made to enjoin obedience to the state, and the payment of taxes, but none are made for good manners; and every thing that has not the force of a law is in no wise obligatory upon the Dutch. A sort of equality which it is necessary to keep up in republics is partly the cause of the insolence of the people. If the coach of one of the high and mighty lords the states-general meets a countryman's waggon upon the road, he must give way as well as the peasant, and both must bear an equal share of the trouble. His footmen would be sure not to insult the waggoner, much less to strike him; for he is a citizen of the republic, and owns no magistrate but when he is in his office. In other respects they are all upon a level*."

I could not give thee better reasons to vindicate the magistrates from the charge against them in foreign countries, that they suffer, and sometimes authorise, the insolence of the common-people. Liberty is attended with a sort of haughtiness, which with men who know not how to guard against the abuse of their happiness, often degenerates into in-

* Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argens, p. 291.

solence. But whatever disorders are occasion'd in civil society, by the brutality of the vulgar, they are perhaps not so considerable as those which accompany despotic power. For, as nothing can be imagin'd so weak and insolent as the multitude, so it must be acknowledged, on the other hand, that there is nothing more precarious and uncertain than the welfare of that state where any person is permitted to do what he pleases with impunity. The rank to which an arbitrary sovereign feels himself exalted, contributes not a little to corrupt his morals, and to strip him of the good qualities which he may have received from nature. "Insolence, says Herodotus *, arises from present happiness and prosperity, and whoever has that vice has all the vices together."

Into what misfortunes does not a bad prince plunge the state which he governs? To what calamities is it not a prey? If we ballance the danger of having a sovereign who forgets to be the father of his people, with the inconvenience attending the haughtiness and pride of the vulgar, it will appear that one evil is as bad as the other; and when we consider the different forms of government, 'tis easy to perceive, "That there is in all something good, and something bad; and that the most rational and surest way, is to esteem that government under which we are born, the best, and cheerfully to submit to it †." If the French, the Spaniards, the Germans, &c. reproach the Dutch with allowing the common-people too great liberties; the Dutch may, in revenge, reproach them with many other things, as inconvenient in civil life, and often more dreadful.

The Dutch may be divided into four classes: The common people that I have been mentioning, forms the First. The Second consists of the merchants and burghers, who are people taken up with their trade and their domestic affairs, are frank and friendly, and such as take care to preserve their own rights and properties, without a desire to encroach upon those

* History of Herodotus, lib. iii. p. 216. † La Bruyere, p. 453 of

of other men. They are grave, and their air is not very engaging, which however makes no impression upon those that know them; and the Dutch are nevertheless true-hearted for all this phlegm, which is owing to the climate, or rather to the remainder of the Spanish manners. The Third class contains the Patricians, that is to say, such as have offices in the magistracy. These live in such a plain manner that they are not envy'd by their fellow-subjects. The Ostracism of the Greeks would be of no service in Holland; for the magistrates have such a satisfaction in being useful to their country, and in being esteemed by their countrymen, that they don't aim to purchase themselves veneration by prodigalities and presents that are always destructive of public liberty; but by their exactness in discharging their functions, and by their care to maintain that good order and union, so necessary to the tranquility of the republic. The Fourth Class consists of the nobles, whose number is very small. Thou wilt perhaps, be surpris'd, dear Isaac, to hear it said, that the nobles form a distinct state in Holland. Most of the people in the neighbouring countries imagine, that nobility is quite extinct in this; or that it has had no prerogatives here since the establishment of the republic. But tis a mistake; for when the Hollanders changed their government, they reserved to the nobles that were then among them, the same privileges which they had enjoyed under the dukes of Burgundy, and under Charles V. which privileges are so considerable, that their college, which consists of eight members, has a right of deputing to all the sovereign colleges. Their number is indeed very small, and the provinces of Friesland and Groningen have many more. These nobles have neither the malapertness of the French fops, nor the haughtiness of the German barons, nor the surly disdainful air of the English lords; but they discharge the offices committed to them with a great deal of honour, frankness and simplicity. In a word, it were to be wish'd that the nobility all over Europe had the same manners, and the same way of
Think-

Thinking. How few petty tyrants should we then see in the world, to what there are now?

I own, dear Isaac, if Heaven had left it to my option in what country to be born, I should have chose Holland or Venice. I know that there's a very wide difference betwixt those two governments; but I know too, that tho' their tracks are different, they both lead to the same place, and that they aim at the same point, which is to render mankind free and happy. The republic of Venice carries it to her subjects, like a tender, tho' a severe mother, who desires to heap favours on her children; but yet is so jealous of her authority, that she does not permit them to dive into her designs. Thus do the Venetian nobles deal with their citizens and the populace. The republic of Holland, on the contrary, is a complaisant mother, who looks upon herself in no other light than as a sister, who determines nothing without advising with her children, and who, to banish all manner of jealousy, has put them all upon a level; so that she does not fear that the most considerable towns will incroach upon the others that are inferior. She foresaw all the inconveniencies that might arise from the ambition of being uppermost, and established the happiness of her people upon a perfect equality. In the second article of the famous union of Utrecht, it is said, "That all and every of the lordships ought inviolably to preserve their franchises, immunities, rights, statutes, and customs received from their ancestors."

Forasmuch as no one town is subject to another, nothing of general affairs can be determined in any single province, but by the unanimous consent of all the towns that are contained in it; nor in the assembly of the states-general, without the approbation of all the seven provinces. This government seems, at first view, to be liable to delays which are tedious and prejudicial. 'Tis true that tis attended with some inconveniencies; but then it must be owned, that to these inconveniencies the safety of the state, and the band which keeps it united, and which preserves the harmony

harmony of all the parts, is in some measure owing. Besides, the number of able men, through whose hands an affair passes, is of no little service to strip it of every thing that might puzzle and deceive the understanding. A prince scarcely ever sees things but dimly, and very often looks upon them with the eyes only of his minister. If the resolutions which he takes in his council are speedy, they are not a jot the safer for that reason; for a little slowness is not unbecoming in affairs on which depends the security of a government. I am not ignorant that there must not be too much delay. But though it were true, that the Dutch government was attended with some dilatoriness that was hurtful, that defect is repaired by so many other advantages that I verily believe it deserves the most distinguished rank among the governments that are perfectly civilized, and wisely conducted.

One advantage which accrues from the necessity of consulting all the towns in affairs of importance, is the constraint and dependence which the states-general, who represent the body of the nation, are under, with regard to their principals, without whose approbation they cannot act; so that, though they seem to be the soul of the republic, yet they are but the organ of it. They cannot make either war or peace, or contract alliances, or increase the taxes, without the consent of all the provinces; nor can those provinces do any thing without the consent of their towns. In a government so regulated tis impossible that any persons at the head of affairs, be they ever so dissatisfied, should be excited by their ambition to create such disturbances, as we find happened in the Roman republic, and many other modern ones, which by indulging the citizens with too great a power, have been very often exposed to most fatal catastrophes. At Amsterdam, there is a perpetual senate of 36 persons that have the right of chusing the burgo-masters and echevins, who in their turn dispose of the subaltern employments, and observe so good a rule in the distribution of the several offices, that tis impos-

impossible for a burgo-master, who happens to have more ambition than his colleagues, to assume to himself the sole right of nomination to dignities, and of giving them all to his creatures.

The senate of Amsterdam has neither the majesty nor the grandeur which that of Rome had. But then the members of it have neither the silly ambition, nor the chimerical ideas of the old Romans. They are so attentive to preserve the privileges of their fellow-subjects to make their trade flourish, to procure themselves all manner of accommodation, and to maintain their liberty, that they don't study to aggrandize themselves by conquests. All the Dutch have the same way of thinking. They content themselves with the domains in their possession. They endeavour to live at peace, not only with the powers of Europe, but also with people the most barbarous; consequently the Savages with whom they have established colonies, have found the Dutch to be MEN, while the wretches of Mexico and Peru have found the Spaniards no better than wild beasts, more cruel than tygers, thirsting for blood and slaughter.

The Spaniards have cemented the colonies which they have formed, by nothing but murder and treachery, while the Dutch have only established theirs by good-nature and humanity. The people with whom they have form'd settlements in several parts of the Indies, look upon them at this day as tutelar deities, who bring them a thousand things that are useful and necessary for life; and the Savages that are subject to the Dutch, are the better for the industry and commerce of this laborious nation.

Though every body is generally employed in trade at Amsterdam, yet the improvement of the sciences is not neglected. There is a Schola Illustris, in which youth are taught Divinity, Belles-Lettres, Philosophy and Physic. And independent of this assistance to the youth that are desirous of applying to the Belles-Lettres, there are in Holland, and the neighbouring provinces, several famous academies;

in which number are those of Leyden, Utrecht, Franeker, Groningen and Harderwyck, which abound with men of merit, among whom are several learned men of the first class.

Notwithstanding the attention of the Dutch to commerce, which is the basis and foundation of their employment, yet it can't be denied that they are lovers of the sciences. And perhaps there is not a place in the universe where there are so many booksellers and printers as at Amsterdam. I have been assured, and am apt to believe it, that there are near 400. From so many printing-presses and booksellers shops, the whole world is furnished with books, good and bad, of which there are here many of both kinds. Nor are there wanting authors, especially such as are hungry and mercenary, of whom, as well as of their works, I will take care to write to thee what is most remarkable.

Farewell, dear Isaac ; and live content and happy ; and let me sometimes hear from thee, which is what I have not done for a long time.

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